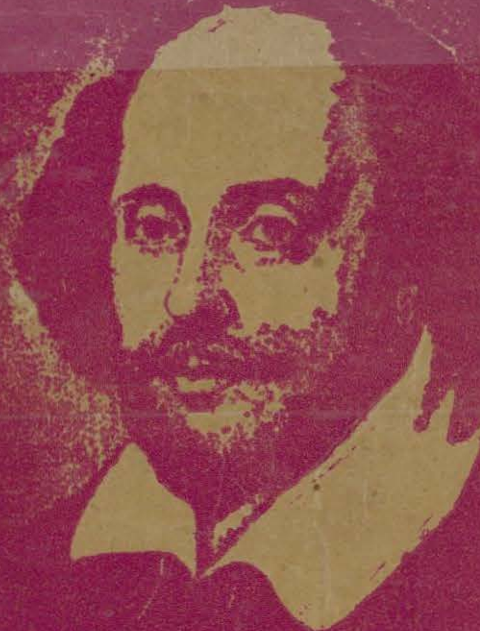


SHAKESPEARE'S :

# HAMLET

BANERJEE

SHAKESPEARE'S

# HAMLET

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES, EXPLANATIONS, PARAPHRASE, QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

( Latest criticism of the play incorporated and examined. )


By

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&

P. THOMAS, M. A. (London)





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## CONTENTS

# HAMLET

1564 — 1616

# INTRODUCTION

## LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE

### Shakespeare at Stratford

The following entry in the register of baptisms is relied upon fixing Shakespeare's birth approximately :

"1564, April 26, Gulielmus Filius Johannes Shakespeare" [William son (of) John Shakespeare].

The practice was to baptize the child within a few days of its birth : so 23rd April was fixed on as Shakespeare's birthday.

His birth-place was Startford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire. Round the town are more or less distant hills, and the view of it from the nearest, the Welcombe Hills, shows the town nestling in the broad valley.

His father, John Shakespeare, appears to have been a glover. He was besides a corn-dealer or farmer, and trader in all kinds of agricultural produce. William Shakespeare was the first son and third child of John Shakespeare, and of Mary Arden, daughter of a husbandman and landowner. John Shakespeare throve in worldly life till he rose to be Mayor of Stratford, and then its chief elder-man,—and thus, he claimed a coat of arms as a gentleman.

It is usually held that Shakespeare went to the free Stratford Grammar School at the age of seven and stayed there till he was fourteen or sixteen at the latest, when he picked up his "small Latin and less Greek." If his picture of "the whinning school-boy, with his satchel and shining morning face, creeping like a snail unwilling to school" be not impersonal then we may suppose that Shakespeare was at some school, and had written from his personal experience. There are frequent references to school boys' pranks in his plays. "The blessed sun of heaven prove a micher (*truant*) and eat black-berries ?" (*I Henry IV*, II. iv). It is pleasing to the fancy to imagine that Shakespeare had his full quota of a school boy's experience and pranks. He must have gone bird's nesting, and joined in May-day Christmas, and New Year's games, helped to make hay, gone to harvest-homes, and sheep shearings (*Winter's Tale*, V. iii), fished (*Much Ado*, III. i), ran with the harriers (*Venus and Adonis*, st. 113-118), and loved a dog and horse (*Venus and Adonis*, st. 44,

52 ; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV. i ; *Richard II*, V. v. ; *I Henry IV*, II. i, etc.) as dearly as every boy in England did.

Lately Professor J. D. Wilson (*The Essential Shakespeare*, p. 41) has questioned the Grammar School education of Shakes·peare, and imagines that Shakespeare's father being an ardent Catholic, the boy might have received his education as a singing boy in the service of some great Catholic noblemen, which explains how he became an actor.

Now whether Shakespeare had any schooling or not, he seems to have had a keen and alert mind which amassed a rich store of learning, quaint and miscellaneous. Lowell writes, "What kind of culture Shakespeare had is uncertain ; how much he had is disputed ; that......must be clear to whoever considers the question."

John Shakespeare later appears to have fallen on evil days, and his son was consequently withdrawn from school. What Shakespeare did after he had left school is uncertain, and must be left to the fancy of every reader. All that we can be certain of is that he stayed for some time longer at Strat·ford, that he noted the many rural scenes around him, took stock of the wild flowers and the birds, and learnt much of the lore of dogs and horses which he displays in his works. His frequent references to sports, hawking, coursing and hunting, make us believe that he must have seen all of these frequently and probably have indulged in them personally.

It is on record that Shakespeare at the age of eighteen was married to Anne Hathaway, his senior by eight years, by special licence on November 28, 1582 and the issue of the marriage, Susanna, a daughter, was baptized on May 26 1583. His twins —Hamnet and Judith— were baptized on February 2, 1585. Thus, when he was hardly twenty-one, he was burdened with three children and a wife eight years older than himself—and it is suggested that he must have worried about them.

Whether his marriage was a happy one must remain an open question. Shakespeare of course dwells on the evils of a woman wedding one younger than herself in *Twelfth Night*, II. iv ; of the disdain and discord which grow through such incompatible union in the *Tempest*, IV. i ; of a wife's jealousy in the *Comedy of Errors*, V. i. But the inference must be left to every reader as it pleases him. J. D. Wilson asserts, "In any case—to nail one more slander to the counter—there is no ground whatever for

imagining that his married life was an unhappy one, which is not the same thing as saying that he himself was a model husband."

His domestic entanglements might have been the reason for his abruptly leaving Stratford to seek his fortunes elsewhere. Tradition gives a different cause: that Shakespeare joined some wild young fellows in breaking into Sir Thomas Lucy's park at Charlecote, about three miles from Stratford, and stealing his deer, for which, and for writing an impossibly bad ballad against Sir Thomas, the latter so persecuted the poet that he had to leave Stratford. But it is all uncertain. It is, however, generally supposed, though without any sure ground, that Shakespeare left Stratford in or about 1586. "The Queen's Players" paid a visit to Stratford in 1587. It is said by some that this was probably the turning point in Shakespeare's life. At any rate, sooner or later, he left his birth town for London, and took the way to fame and fortune.

## Shakespeare in London

The legend that Shakespeare, on the first appearance in London, employed himself in holding horse's heads outside theatre doors, or worked in a printer's or lawyer's office, is now discredited. The earliest notice of Shakespeare in London occurs in 1592 in the death-bed effusion of Robert Greene—*A Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance*, in which Shakespeare is referred to as "an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers" and as "Johannes factotum." Henry Chettle, who edits Greene's pamphlet, makes a nice apology to Shakespeare. It may be inferred from Greene's ill-natured allusion that Shakespeare must have been actively engaged in writing plays by 1592, that at least of some of them were based upon the works of other men.

The playhouse with which tradition connects him was called "The Theatre," and was built by a player and joiner, James Burbage in 1577, in the fields outside the City Walls, on the west of Bishopgate Street, in Shoreditch. In 1598, it was pulled down and in 1599 rebuilt as "The Globe," on Bankside, Southwark.

The records of Shakespeare's life and doings henceforth are fairly continuous. Not long after he found a patron in Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. In 1596 he seems to have been well off enough to apply for a coat of arms. On August 11, 1596, Shakespeare's only son, Hamnet, died and was buried at Stratford. His son's death must have been a great blow to Shakespeare, wishing as he did to found a family. Now he seems

to have been growing rich. In 1597 he bought for £ 50 the largest house in his native town, New Place, and later, he made further investments in land in the neighbourhood. When "The Theatre" was rebuilt as "The Globe," Shakespeare was taken in as a partner—"a fellowship in a cry of players" (*Hamlet*, III. ii). The admission as a partner into the profits of the *New Globe* marks definitely his success in London better than his purchase of New Place at Stratford.

In the beginning of the year, 1601, Essex's rebellion broke out, and for his share in it, Lord Southampton was imprisoned in the Tower whence he was not released until James I's accession in 1603. Shakespeare's fortunes thus suffered a temporary eclipse. On March 24, 1603, Queen Elizabeth died, and, as Chettle complains, "the silver-tongued Melicent" (Shakespeare) did not "drop from his honied Muse one sable tear." On James' accession, Shakespeare's company, originally entitled "The Lord Chamberlain's Servants," assumed the title of "The King's Players."

**Shakespeare at Startford again**

Shakespeare's life in London was an unbroken record of success and growing prosperity. "The rest of his story, so far as it can be read in the records, is one of continued good fortune. In the worldly sense, at least, Shakespeare had become, and remained till his death, a prosperous and wealthy man. The numerous documentary references to him that have come down to us are mainly concerned with property bought, money sued for in the courts, or plays of his which were acted or published."

In or about 1609, after the period of his great tragedies, Shakespeare is supposed to have left London for Stratford. "There is nothing definite to fix the change to any one year; but the internal evidence of his plays and sonnets, as well as the fact that he must, before he made his will, have sold or released to his partners all his interest in the Globe and Blackfriars' profits and his plays almost obliges us to conclude that his leaving town dates from 1609 or thereabouts." Since his retirement to Stratford he seems to have been once suing for the recovery of his share in the tithes which he had bought in 1605, and to have purchased a house and a piece of ground near the Blackfriars Theatre. This Blackfriars House was part of a large property belonging to the Bacon family and when this was cut up and sold, Bacon's widow Anne (mother of the great Francis Bacon) retained the title-deeds. On April 26, 1615,

Shakespeare associated himself with his fellow-buyers in a Bill of Complaint to recover the title-deeds, and the widow's heir, Matthew Bacon, was ordered by the Lord Chancellor to bring the deeds to court.

Having executed his will on March 25, Shakespeare died at New Place on April 23, 1616, and was buried in the chancel of Stratford Church on the 25th. The only report as to the cause of his death is in the Diary (printed in 1839) of the Rev. John Ward, who was appointed Vicar of Stratford in 1662, that "Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had an eerie meeting, and it seems drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a fervour there contracted."

**Chronology of Chief Incidents in Shakespeare's Life**

1564. April 26. Shakespeare baptized.

1571. At the age of seven, according to the custom of the time, Shakespeare's school-life probably began.

1575. Queen Elizabeth visited the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth. Shakespeare's father might have taken him to witness the Kenilworth festivities (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, II, iii).

1578. Shakespeare left school. His father's fortunes at a low ebb.

1582. Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway.

1583. May 26, Shakespeare's daughter, Susanna, baptized.

1585. February 2. Shakespeare's twin children, Hamnet and Judith, baptized.

1586. Shakespeare left Stratford.

1592. Shakespeare referred to in Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*.

1593. *Venus and Adonis* published and dedicated to Southampton.

1594. *Titus Andronicus* acted by the Earl of Sussex's men.

1596. August 11. Shakespeare's son Hamnet buried.

1597. May 4. Shakespeare bought New Place.

1598. Francis Mere's *Palladis Tamia* published, which contained a list of Shakespeare's plays up-to date in a chronological order. Shakespeare acted in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*.

1599. Shakespeare purchased shares in the Globe.

1601. Essex executed, and Southampton imprisoned. John Shakespeare buried.

1602. May 1. Shakespeare purchased one hundred and

seven acres of arable land which he added to New Place.

1603. February 2. Shakespeare's company performed before the Queen at Richmond.

1604. March 15. Shakespeare took part in the procession on the occasion of James' entry.

1607. Susanna married John Hill.

1608. September 9, Susanna's mother buried. Shakespeare established himself at New Place.

1609. *Sonnets* published.

1613. *The Tempest* performed at the festivities in celebration of the marriage of Princess Elizabeth with the Elector Frederick. The Globe burnt down.

1616. January 25. Shakespeare made his will, not signed till March 25.

April 23. Died.

April 25. Buried in the chancel of Stratford Church.

### Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays

*Evidence—External and Internal.*

External evidence consists of (1) Entries of Poems and Plays, before or on publication, by publishers, in the *Registers* of the Stationers' Company incorporated by Queen Mary in 1557. (2) The publications of the Poems and Plays. (3) Allusions in contemporary books, diaries, letters, etc.

The *Stationers' Registers*, and publication establish the dates of two Poems and six Plays, all printed in Shakespeare's lifetime, except *As You Like It* which is mentioned in the *Stationers' Registers*, and of which the date can be conjectured to be 1600.

Below is given the table of results :

*Venus and Adonis* entered and published in 1593 :
*Lucrece* entered in 1594 ;
*Henry IV* entered in 1597 and published in 1598 ;
*Much Ado* entered in 1600 ;
*Hamlet* entered in 1602, published in 1603-4 ;
*Lear* entered in 1607, published in 1608 ;
*Pericles* entered in 1608, published in 1609.

Allusions in contemporary books, etc., give the dates of five plays : *Romeo and Juliet*, before 1595 ; *Julius Caesar*, 1601 : *Twelfth Night, February* 1602 ; *Winter's Tale*, 1611 ; *Henry VIII*, 1613.

The books and diaries which supply the dates are as follows: Weever's Sonnet in his *Epigrammes*, 1595 for *Romeo and Juliet*; Weever's *Mirror of Martyrs*, 1601 for *Julius Caesar*; Manningham's *Diary*, Feb. 2, 1601-2 for *Twelfth Night*; Dr. Forman's *Diary* for *The Winter's Tale*, 1611; Thomas Lorkin's letter to Sir Thomas Puckering, dated "London, this last of June, 1613" and John Chamberlaine's letter to Sir Ralph Winwood, dated London, 8th July, 1613, both of which refer to the burning of Globe, or Playhouse, during the performance of *Henry VIII*.

Internal evidence consists of allusions in the plays to past or contempory events, and also relies upon the Style and Temper of the works. Allusions in the plays to contemporary events suggest positively the date of one play, *Henry V*. The Prologue to Act V refers to the Earl of Essex:

> "Now the general of our gracious empress;
> As in good time he may, from Ireland coming;
> Bring rebellion broached on his sword,
> How many would the peaceful city quit
> To welcome him!"

The Prologue to Act I refers to the newly-built wooden "O", or Globe Theatre, opened in 1599:—

> "Can this cockpit hold,
> The vasty fields of France? or may we cram,
> Within this wooden O, the very casques,
> That did affright the air at Agincourt?"

The reference to the great earthquake of April 6, 1580 in *Romeo and Juliet* helps to determine its date:—

> "Come Lammas-eve at night shall be fourteen,
> Susan and she—God rest all Chritian souls—
> Were of an age: well, Susan is with God;
> She was too good for me: but, as I said,
> On Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen;
> That shall she, marry; I remember it well.
> 'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years."

This gives either 1591 or 1593 for the date of the play.

For the rest of Shakespeare's plays, *i. e.*, twenty-six out of thirty-seven plays, we have to depend on the style and temper of the works. First we may take the evidence of metre. If we compare *The Comedy of Errors*, an earlier play, with *The Winter's Tale*, we may deduce the following results: In *The Errors, the*

*end-stopped* lines *i. e., lines* with a pause at the end, are a marked feature, but in *The Winter's Tale* lines are *run-on* (*i. e.*, the sense is carried from one line to the next with a fair proportion of weak or light endings which help the process, and varied central pauses—thus the lines in *The Errors* are stiff and formal, while in *The Winter's Tale* they have the ease and freedom of natural talk. Further in the *Errors* lines are regular—five iambic feet—but in *The Winter's Tale* there is sometimes an extra or eleventh syllable or even a twelfth syllable. The results may be thus tabulated :

(*i*) Run-on lines in *The Errors* : 1 in 7·65
*Winter's Tale* 1 in 2·3.
(*ii*) Extra-syllables in *The Errors : nil*
*Winter's Tale* 1 in 1·75.
(*iii*) Weak endings in *The Errors* : *nil.*
*Winter's Tale* : 1 in 4·2.

The proportion of rhyming lines is another test. *Love's Labour's Lost*, a very early play, may be compared with the latest plays, *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale.*

*Love's Labour's Lost*......1,028 rhyme, to 579 blank, or 1 to ·56

*The Tempest*.........2 rhyme, to 1,458 blank, or 1 to 779.

*The Winter's Tale*......... 0 rhyme, to 1,825 blank, or 1 to infinity.

So we may compare the proportion of *run-on* to *end-stopped lines* in three of the earliest and latest plays :—

Earliest plays :—
*Love's Labour's Lost*......1 in 18·14
*The Comedy of Errors*......1 in 10·7
*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*......1 in 10.

Latest plays :—
*The Tempest*......1 in 3·02
*Cymbeline*......1 in 2·52
*The Winter's Tale*......1 in 2·12

Dowden, in his *Growth of Shakespeare's Mind and Art*, thus sums up the characteristics of Shakespeare's early plays—(i) frequency of rhyme in various arrangements ; (ii) occurrence of rhymed doggerel verse ; (iii) comparative infrequency of feminine or double ending, of weak ending, of unstopped line ; (iv) regular internal structure of the line ; (v) frequency of classical allusions ; (vi) frequency of puns and conceits ; (vii) wit and imagery drawn

out in detail to the point of exhaustion ; (viii) clowns who are, by comparison with the later comic characters, outstanding persons in the play, told off specially for clownage ; (ix) the presence of termagant or shrewish women ; x) soliloquies addressed rather to the audience (to explain the business of the piece, or the motive of the actors) than to the speaker's self ; (xi) symmetry in the grouping or persons.

Now proceeding from Shakespeare's earlier to later plays we can trace the changes in style and metre which marked the progress of Shakespeare's mind and spirit. He soon gave up the doggerel, the excessive word-play, the quip and crank of his early plays, their puns, conceits and occasional bombast : he curbed his exuberant fancy by the control of the higher imagination and poetic creation ; he subdued the rhetoric of his historical plays ; he exchanged the playfulness of fancy, the verbal ingenuity, the farce of the early plays for the death-struggle of the passions, the terror of his tragedies, laying bare the inmost recesses of the human soul ; and then passed serene and tender, to the pastorals and romances of his later age.

*A Note on Folio and Quarto* : The term *folio* is applied to a book, the pages of which are formed by a sheet of paper folded once, and the term *quarto*, to a book, the papers of which are formed by a sheet of paper folded twice. All the plays of Shakespeare except *Pericles* were used in Folio (known as the first Folio), in 1623 by his friends and fellow actors, John Heminge and Henry Condell, and dedicated to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery. Only seventeen of Shakespeare's plays were printed in Quarto during his life-time. The first Folio is of great value, it is, in some instances, more correct than quartos, and contains seventeen plays, of which no quarto editions exist. The second Folio appeared in 1632, the third in 1663-64, the fourth in 1685. Single plays appeared in quarto form during Shakespeare's life-time and throughout a large part of the seventeenth century.

**Classification of Shakespeare's Plays in the Folio of 1623.**

**Histories**

*Henry VI.*
*Richard II.*
*Richard III.*
*King John.*
*Henry IV.*
*Henry V.*
*Henry VIII.*

**Tragedies**

*Titus Andronicus.*
*Romeo and Juliet.*
*Julius Caesar.*

*Othello.*
*Lear.*
*Macbeth.*
*Antony and Cleopatra*
*Coriolanus.*
*Cymbeline.*
*Hamlet.*
*Timon of Athens.*

**Comedies**

*All's Well that Ends Well.*
*Measure for Measure.*
*Troilus and Cressida.*
*Taming of the Shrew.*
*Merry Wives of Windsor.*
*Much Ado About Nothing.*
*As You Like It.*
*Twelfth Night.*
*Love's Labour's Lost.*
*Comedy of Errors.*
*Two Gentlemen of Verona.*
*Midsummer Night's Dream.*
*Merchant of Venice.*
*Winter's Tale.*
*Tempest.*

## Development of Shakespeare's Dramatic Art

### First Period

The following plays belong to the First Period (1587-1594 ?)

*Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Romeo and Juliet* (with the poem of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* and probably the Troilus part of *Troilus and Cressida*), *Richard II*, 1, 2 and 3, *Henry VI*, and *Richard III*.

In the first period Shakespeare served his dramatic apprenticeship. In the earliest of his plays he shows an extraordinary facility in expression and a rare gift of phrasing which ever distinguished his work. But the verse form with the practice of rhyming and five rigid iambic feet did not make for appropriate dramatic expression. Even when rhyme was not used, the verse seemed to be crude and strained.

The use of Blank Verse by Marlowe in *Tamburlaine* (1587) opened a new era in dramatic composition. The possibilities of blank verse were but partly revealed by Marlowe in his creation of glowing forms and gorgeous scenes inspired by the stirring events and great stories of danger and discovery of Elizabethan days. Shakespeare saw his opportunity. From blank verse he drew music and colour—myriad-toned and myriad-timed. He could express through its medium the delicate beauty of a flower, the most gentle and the most unruly of emotions, the sadness of the death-scene, the splendid pageantry of state and arms.

In this striving towards freedom of expression, Shakespeare, first began to discard rhyme, and resort to such metrical devices as *double endings*, *light* and *weak endings*. In *Love's Labour's Lost* there are only 9 double endings (*i. e.*, extra unaccented syllables

at the end of lines), but in *Richard III*, which ends the First Period there are 570 double endings. In the plays of the first period there are only 17 light endings and 2 weak endings, but in the later play of *Antony and Cleopatra* alone there are 71 light and 28 weak endings—and they are ever on the increase in his later plays. A light ending, is a monosyllable at the end of a line, on which the voice can dwell in reading and a weak end ing is a monosyllable at the end of a line, which both, in sense- and pronunciation, is carried on to the next line. *And* is a light, and *where* is a weak ending in the following verse from *Coriolanus. III. ii.*

> "Which else would put you to your fortune, *and*
> The hazard of much blood,
> I would dissemble with my nature, *where*
> My fortunes and my friends at stake, required
> I should do so in honour."

This external evidence apart, the plays of the First Period are linked together in plot and expression—they are mainly lyrical in character and are steeped in the gaiety of youth. In *Love's Labour's Lost* Shakespeare ridicules contemporary mannerisms and affectations, but the noteworty fact is Shakespeare's use of *mistaken identity* which is the source of so much fun in his early comedies, and thesymmetrical plot. The symmerical plot and mistaken-identity devices are employed again in *The Comedy of Errors*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Two Gentleme of Verona.* Characters are not sufficiently individualized in the early plays. *Richard III* is a one-character play, written under the shadow of Marlowe. *Richard II* has plenty of rhyme, quibbles and weak lines, matched by consistecies in the central figure—its only relieving feature is its lyrical fervour. As regards the art of construcınon it may be noted that Shakespeare first intermingles themes iu *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which develops into a plot with an under-plot in later plays ; but in *Romeo* and the two *Richards* Shakespeare discovers and applies the principle of causing the action to revolve round, and depend upon, one or two central figures, of making character and not incident the source of the action—a principle which is fully carried out in his tragedies. We note also that there is an increasing command over materials displayed by Shakespeare, and and an increasing insight into character and mind. The lyricism of Shakespeare's early plays comes to full flower in *Romeo* and in *The Two Gentlemen.* The poems, *Venus* and *Lucrece*, are the works of a student

who is intoxicated with beauty—the beauty of the material universe as well as the beauty of mind and imagination.

### Second Period

To the Second Period (1594 to 1601) belong *King John, Merchant of Venice, The Taming of the Shrew,* 1 and 2 *Henry IV, Henry V, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Much Ado about Nothing, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, All's Well that Ends Well,* and the *Sonnets.*

In the Second Period the art of characterization is considerably advanced. First he touches on many different phases of life and presents a gallery of portraits. The political plays (*John, Henry IV, Henry V*) epitomize the great era of Elizabeth's reign, and embody her political insight and wisdom.

Henry IV advises his son that foreign wars unite a nation, and Henry V acts on that policy : the questions of Elizabeth's sovereignty, her right to the crown, are reflected in *John* and *Henry IV*, as are the Elizabethan necessity of preventing foreign intervention in national politics, and the principle that however vexatious a controversy concerning the right to rule might be, it was less important than the duty of ruling strongly, wisely and well. Throughout is the plea for national unity ; throughout is the exultation of national strength, pride of England, love of its green fields and its sea-bound shores, rejocing in its conquests, faith in its power, and hope for its future.

As illustrative of Shakespeare's insight into character, it may be pointed out that he shows wonderful knowledge of the Celtic temperament in these plays ; Glendower in 1 *Henry IV*, credulous, superstitious, passionate, over-ruled in his contracts by prophecies ; Gower in 2 *Henry IV* ; Fluellen in *Henry V*, one who loves argument, quotes precedent, forgets names, likes literature, and is brave and hardy, and lastly Sir Hugh Evans in the *Merry Wives*, a most "vehement" man.

Secondly, Shakespeare shows rare skill and delicacy in drawing the women characters. Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* is the beginning of that succession of beautiful types of splendid womanhood, whose watch-word is *devotion*, and whose beauty and purity touch their character with pathos in their struggles against fate. Portia foreshadows Helena, Ophelia, Isabella, Desdemona and Cordelia. Rosalind and Celia of *As You Like It* are of an ideal cast. Rosalind and Celia, wandering wearily with their

devoted Touchstone, through the wild, wonderful ways of a strange forest, remind one of Virgil's *Eclogues*, where love-lorn shepherds tell the story of their love sorrow in metrical cadences. There is a less pleasant and more passionate note in *All's Well That Ends Well*.

The links that connect this period with the first may be noted. The magnificent lyrical outburst of *Romeo* is echoed in *The Merchant of Venice*, when Jessica, so like Juliet, and Lorenzo tell over again the story of their love ; Marlowe's influence appears again in Shylock, and to Marlowe Shakespeare pays a tribute in *As You Like It* ;

"Dead Shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,
Whoever loved that loved not at first sight ?"

Rosalind and Celia repeat in part the story of Julia and Silvia in the *Two Gentlemen*, and the device of mistaken identity, empployed in the *Dream* and *Errors*, is used again in *Twelfth Night*. For *Venus* and *Lucrece* we have the "s ugared" *Sonnets*—and the sonnets strike the note of gloom and despair which prelude the Third Period of Soul-racking tragedies.

Lastly, the *metrical advance* in the Second Period. the proportion of double endings increases from 8 per cent in the First Period to 12.2 per cent in the Second. Light and weak ending in the First Period are as rare as ·162 per cent ; in the Second Period they rise to ·359 per cent. The Ratio between rhyme and blank verse in the First Period is as 1 : 3.3 ; in the Second Period it is only as 1 : 10-04.

### Third Period

To the Third Period (1601—1609) belong *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*. *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*.

In the tragedies, Shakespeare deals with the problems of life and fate, evil-doing, or error, or excess followed by punishment, and also the wider net spread by evil, in which the innocent are often involved, with the suggestion of a dark power which crushes down the wicked and the innocent alike. As side-issues there are the stings of ingratitude and treachery—a *motif* which is further worked out in his plays of the Fourth Period, with the crowning result of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In *Julius Caesar*, Caesar pays the penalty of ambition, and

Brutus falls through error—or want of judgment—and there is the suggestion of dark forces which man reckons without. The strain of speculation in Brutus anticipates Hamlet, and in Hamlet speculation usurps the place of action. In *Hamlet* the bright and happy life of the young prince is darkened by the lust and ingratitude of his mother, and eclipsed by the revelation of his ungrateful uncle's foul murder of his father. Of the dark forces that drag down the hero of Shakespeare's tragedy there is almost always an innocent woman victim; so Ophelia in *Hamlet*. *Measure for Measure* is a comedy. Against the gloom of lust and filth which touches this comedy rises, radiant as a star, the figure of the "ensky'ed and sainted" Isbella. In her is recaptured the breath of his earlier comedies. There is a note of stark realism in *Troilus and Cressida*. Hector alone is untouched by this realism—and Hector with his sentiment of honour and impracticability recalls Brutus. In *Othello* the *treachery* of the trusted friend, Iago, ruins the hero and involves the innocent Desdemona in destruction, the gloom of which is only relieved by the idyll of the hero's winning and wooing his bride. In *Macbeth* Shakespeare, for the first time, introduces a woman who appears to be unsexed and all for ambition. The idea of moral retribution—death of Lady Macbeth, under the pangs of conscience and death of Macbeth from Macduff's sword—is nowhere more clearly worked out than in this tragedy. Then follow the terrors and horrors of *Lear*. "Ingratitude of daughters treachery of a son driving father to despair, to madness, and to death,—infidelity of a wife plotting her husband's death, and poisoning her sister, to gratify her own lust, the heavens themselves joining in the wild storm of earthly passions"—these are at the core of the tragedy of *Lear*. *Antony and Cleopatra* admired for its gorgeous eastern colour and the most wonderful study of a woman that Shakespeare has ever made. "In the earlier group of tragedies, from *Julius Caesar* to *Lear*, a *woman* is the passive confidant, the helpless victim, the good angel, or the deadly foe, of the tragic hero; in the late group she becomes a companion spirit, holding him by the spell of personality, of passion, or of blood. Sex has no part in the sinister magnetism of Lady Macbeth but in the "strong toil of grace" cast by Cleopatra over Antony—the magnetism of sex becomes a source of tragedy, less harrowing indeed than the tragedy of Othello or Lear, but ever richer in consummate poetry. *Coriolanus* is linked, on the one hand, with *Julius Caesar* by its picture of mob-mentality and with *Lear* by portraying the self-will and pride

of the hero. But in *Coriolanus* is struck the keynote to the plays of the Fourth Period : "Thinkest thou it honourable for a nobleman still to remember wrongs ?" In *Timon* there is real hardening of the soul of the hero, not by crime, but by ingratitude. He cries, "I am *misanthropos*, and hate mankind." And so he ends, "Who, alive, all living men did hate."

Now the metrical advance. In the Second Period the double endings are 11·2 per cent ; in the Third Period they increase to 22·08 per cent. In the Second Period the light and weak endings are ·359 per cent : in the Third Period they increase to 1·43 per cent. The ratio of rhyme to blank verse in the Second Period is as 1 : 10·04, in the Third Period it is as 1 : 25·8.

### FOURTH PERIOD

To the Fourth Period (1609 to 1612) belong *Pericles*, *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Henry VIII*. Shakespeare passes from the storm and stress of the Third Period to "a great peacefulness of light," a harmony of earth and heaven. The new notes are the notes of mercy and forgiveness, reunion and reconciliation. Two features specially distinguish the plays of the Fourth Period.

First, there is a tender touch about the women. We may contrast the women of the Third with the women of the Fourth Period. Portia, the gentle wife of Brutus, is lost amid plots and assassinations. Ophelia is denied her love and is drowned. Isabella, sorely tried by temptations, barely escapes ruin. Desdemona is crushed by fate against which her simple and perfect womanhood cries out in vain. Poor Lady Macduff is deserted and murdered. Cordelia is disowned, banished from her father—is wronged and slain. Chaste Octavia is wedded to Antony and deserted. Volumnia and Virgilia are made the instruments of that ruin which they sought to avert. Now, what gracious tenderness environs the women of the Fourth Period : Thaisa and Marina, separated from Pericles, patient in adversity, are reunited at last and find happiness, Miranda, unaffected, unsophisticated, untainted by one ungenerous thought or impulse, tender, pitiful, open-hearted, so different from the Stratford-type women of Period I, the lively, pert and competent London type women of Period II, the fate-stricken women of Period III, nurtured in the love and wisdom of a noble father, is at last rewarded with the love of a noble prince. Imogen belied, wronged by her husband, is at last reconciled, and forgives all who have done

her harm. Harmione disgraced and thought to be dead, suffers in silence and finally forgives the husband who has so injured her. Perdita, the fair shepherdess, fragrant with the breath of the open fields and wild flowers, lost to her kin, is found again and takes part in the joyful reunion.

Secondly, these Fourth Period plays take us back to the joys of the simple life of nature. They paint Shakespeare's Stratford life—the wild flowers of the countryside, the junketing of the rustics, the merry reguish pedlar with his fardels for the maidens, the shepherds, the sheep-shearing And as the country scenes point to Shakespeare's renewed life at Stratford, so the scenes of reconciliation between husband and wife, the love of fathers for their daughters, and their watchful care over their children's destiny, point to his renewed life with his wife Anne, and his care of his two daughters—all that then remained alive of his children.

In the Fourth Period, Shakespeare returns to his original method of construction. Instead of concentrating the action on two or three main charactres, as he did in his tragedies, he intermingles themes, as in the First Period, but paints them on a broader canvas still keeping character in the forefront. In many things Shakespeare seems to return to period I—in pictures of country life, in the portraiture of girls in themes like the sleeping portion ; but here the handling of materials is finer, characterization is deeper, charity and forgiveness are every where—we seem almost to be in a new heaven and a new earth.

In material matters the double endings increase to 38 8 per cent from the 22·08 per cent of Period III : the light and weak endings increase to 5·06 per cent from the 1·43 per cent of Period III ; but the ratio of rhyme to blank verse decreases to 1 : 53·8 from the 1 : 25·8 of Period III.

### Shakespeare's Self-Revelation

Shakespeare is a dramatist and a dramatist does not lay bare his soul in his plays. The idea of getting at the soul of Shakespeare through his plays will be resented by many critics. The drama is an "objective" art ; the less said about the dramatist's self-revelation, the better. As a matter of fact the dramatist conceals himself behind his characters—and particularly in the case of Shakespeare who has created such a bewildering variety of characters, no two being alike, his personality, if he has reflected

it in any of his characters, is absolutely elusive. Yet lately Professor J. Dover Wilson claims to have discovered the "Essential Shakespeare" in his interesting study of the problem. His book is the high watermark of the "subjective" interpretation of Shakespeare. We need not go the whole hog with Professor Wilson but we may accept the reasoned conclusions of Leslie Stephen. And here is Leslie Stephen's summing up of the case:

"A dramatist is no more able than anybody else to bestow upon his characters talents which he does not himself possess. If —as critics are agreed—Shakespeare's characters show humour, Shakespeare must have a sense of humour himself. When Mercutio indulges in the wonderful tirade upon Queen Mab, or Jaque smoralizes in the forest, we learn that their creator had certain power of mind just as clearly as if we were reading a report of one of the wit combats at the "Mermaid." It is harder to define those qualities precisely than to say what is implied by John's talk at the "Mitre," but the idiosyncrasy is at least as strongly impressed upon such characteristic mental displays. If we were to ask any critic whether such passages could be attributed to Marlowe or Ben Jonson, he would enquire whether we took him for a fool. If we were considering a bit of purely scientific exposition, the inference to character would not exist. A mathematician, I suppose, could tell me that the demonstration of some astronomical theorem was in Newton's manner, and the remark would not show whether Newton was amiable or spiteful, jealous or generous. But a man's humour and fancy are functions of his characters as well of his reason. To appreciate them clearly is to know how he feels as well as how he argues: what are the aspects of life which especially impress him, and what morals are most congenial. I do not see how the critic can claim an instinctive perception of the Shakespearian mode of thought without a perception of some sides of his character. You distinguish Shakespeare's work from his rival's as confidently as any expert judging of handwriting. You admit, too, that you can give a very fair account of the characteristics of the other writers. Then surely you can tell me—or at least you know "implicitly"—what is the quality in which they are defective and Shakespeare pre-eminent.

"Half my knowledge of a friend's character is derived from his talk, and not the less if it is playful, ironical and dramatic. When we agree that Shakespeare's mind was vivid and subtle, that he shows a unique power of blending the tragic and the comic, we

already have some indications of character; and incidentally we catch revelations of more specific peculiarities. Part of my late reading was a charming book in which Mr. Justice Madden sets forth Shakespeare's accurate knowledge of field sports. It seems to prove conclusively a proposition against which there can certainly be no presumption. We may be quite confident that he could thoroughly enjoy a day's coursing on the Cotswold Hills, and we know by the most undeniable proof that his sense of humour was tickled by the oddities of his fellow sportsmen, the Shallows and Slenders. It is at least equally clear that he had the keenest enjoyment of charms of the surrounding scenery. He could not have written *Midsummer Night's Dream* or *As You Like It*, if the poetry of the English greenwood had not entered into his soul. The single phrase about the daffodils—so often quoted for its magical power–is proof enough, if there were no other, of a nature exquisitely sensitive to the beauties of flowers and of spring time. It wants, again no such confirmation as Fuller's familiar anecdote to convince us that Shakespeare could enjoy convivial meetings at taverns, that he could listen to, and probably join in, a catch by Sir Toby Belch or make Lord Southampton laugh as heartily as Prince Hall laughed at the jests of Falstaff. Shakespeare, again as this suggests, was certainly not a Puritan. That may be inferred by judicious critics from particular phrases or from the relations of Puritans to players in general. But without such reasoning we may go further and say that the very conception of a Puritan Shakespeare involves a contradiction in terms. He represents, of course, in the fullest degree, the type which is just the antithesis of Puritanism; the large and tolerant acceptance of human nature which was intolerable to the rigid and strait-laced fanatics, whom, nevertheless, we may forgive in consideration of their stern morality. People, indeed, have argued, very fruitlessly I fancy, as to Shakespeare's religious beliefs. Critics tell us, and I have no doubt truly, that it would be impossible to show conclusively from his works whether he considered himself to be an Anglican or a Catholic. But a man's real religion is not to be defined by the formula he accepts or inferred even from the church to which he belongs. His outward profession is chiefly a matter of accident and circumstance, not of character. We may, I think, be pretty certain that Shakespeare's religion, whatever may have been its external form, included a profound sense of the mystery of the world and of the little lives that are rounded by a sleep : a conviction that we are such stuff

as dreams are made of, and a constant sense, such as is impressed in the most powerful sonnets that our present life is an infinitesimal moment in the vast 'abyss' of eternity. Shakespeare, we know, read Montaigne; and if, like Montaigne, he accepted the creed in which he was brought up, he would have sympathized in Montaigne's sceptical and humorous view of theological controversialists playing their fantastic tricks of logic before high Heaven Undoubtedly, he despised a pedant, and the pedantry which displayed itself in the wranglings of Protestant Papist divines would clearly not have escaped his contempt. Critics, again, have disputed as to Shakespeare's politics; and the problem is complicated by the desire to show that his politics were as good as his poetry. Sound Liberals are unwilling to admit that he had aristocratic tendencies, because they hold that all aristocrats are wicked and narrow-minded. It is, of course, an anachronism to transplant our problems to those days, and we cannot say what Shakespeare would have thought of modern applications of the principles which he accepted. But I do not see how any man could have been more clearly what may be called an intellectual aristocrat. His contempt for the mob may be good-humoured enough, but is surely unequivocal: from the portrait of Jack Cade, promising like a good Socialist, that the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops, to the first, second and third citizens who give a display of their insanity and instability in *Coriolanus* or *Julius Caesar*. Shakespeare may be speaking dramatically through Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*; but at least he must have fully appreciated the argument for order: and understood by order that the cultivated and intelligent should rule and the common herd have as little direct voice in state affairs as Elizabeth and James could have desired.

"When we have got so far, we have already, as it seems to me, admitted certain attributes, which are as much personal as literary. If you admit that Shakespeare was a humorist, intensively sensitive to natural beauty, a scorner of the pedantry, whether of scholars or theologians, endowed with an amazingly wide and tolerant view of human nature, radically opposed to Puritanism or any kind of fanaticism, and capable of hearty sympathy with the popular instincts and yet with a strong persuasion of the depth of popular folly, you inevitably affirm at least some negative propositions about the man himself. You can say with confidence what are the characteristics which were thoroughly antipathetic to him, even though it may be difficult to

describe accurately the characteristics which he positively embodied.

"Another point is, it would seem, too plain to need much emphasis. The author of *Romeo and Juliet* was, I suppose, capable of Romeo's passion. We may 'doubt that the sun is fire', but can hardly doubt that Shakespeare could love. In this case, it seems to me, the power of intuition is identical with the emotional power. A man could surely have been unable to find the most memorable utterance in literature of passions of which he was not himself abnormally susceptible. It may be right to describe a poet's power as marvellous, but why should we hold it to be miraculous ? I agree with Pope's common sense remark about Heloisa's 'well-sung woes', 'he best can paint 'em who can feel 'em most'. Surely that is the obvious explanation, and I am unable to see why there should be any difficulty in receiving it."

**Shakespeare's Genius—As a Poet and Dramatist.**

*1. Universality.*

"And such was Shakespeare, whose strong soul could climb
Steps of sheer terror, sound the ocean grand
Of passions deep, or over Fancy's strand
Trip with his fairies, keeping step and time.
His too the power to laugh out full and clear
With unembittered joyance, and to move
Along the silent, shadowy paths of love
As tenderly as Dante, whose austere
Stern spirit through the worlds below, above,
Unsmiling strode, to tell the tidings here".

—*W. W. Story.*

"Shakespeare's work alone can be said to possess the organic strength and infinite variety, the throbbing fulness, vital complexity and breathing truth of Nature herself. In points of artistic resource and technical ability—such as copious and expressive diction, freshness and pregnancy of verbal combination, richly modulated verse, and structural skill in the handling of incident and action—Shakespeare's supremacy is indeed sufficiently assured. But, after all, it is of course in the spirit and substance of his work, his power of piercing to the hidden centres of character of touching the deepest springs of impulse and passion, out of which are the issues of life and of evolving those issues dramatically with a

flawless strength, subtlety and truth, which raises him so immensely above and beyond not only the best of the play-wrights who went before him, but the whole line of illustrious dramatists that came after him. It is Shakespeare's unique distinction that he has an absolute command over all the complexities of thought and feeling that prompt to action and bring out the dividing lines of character. He sweeps with the hand of a master the whole gamut of human experience, from the lowest note to the very top of its compass, from the sportive childish treble of Mamilius, and the pleading boyish tones of Prince Arthur, up to the spectre-haunted terrors of Macbeth, the tropical passion of Othello, the agonised sense and tortured spirit of Hamlet, the sustained elemental grandeur, the Titanic force, the utterly tragical pathos of King Lear." —*T. S. Baynes.*

"The greatest genius that, perhaps human nature has yet produced, our *myriad-minded* Shakespeare." —*S. T. Coleridge.*

"No other author had ever so copious, so bold, so *creative* an imagination, with so perfect a knowledge of the passions, the humours and sentiments of mankind. He painted all characters, from kings down to peasants, with equal truth and equal force. If human nature were destroyed, and no monument were left of it except his works, other beings might know *what man was* from those writings." —*George, Lord Lyttleton.*

"When Learning's triumph over her barb'rous foes,
First, rear'd the stage, immortal Shakespeare rose;
Each change of many coloured life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new." —*Garrick.*

Shakespeare is above all writers the poet of Nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of man and his environment, manners and life. His characters do not belong to this country or that, one profession or the other, but come from all lands and all walks of life. They are the rightful progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply and observation will always find, unaffected alike by the vagaries of fashion, the accidents of custom and the changes of opinion. They run the whole gamut of the world, the flesh and the devil, motivated by general passions and principles and conforming to the common pattern of life. Shakespeare's persons are not individuals : they are a species eternal and true taken from nowhere in particular, though met here, there and everywhere.

And yet paradoxically enough no two characters of Shakes-

peare are alike. Shakespeare never repeats himself. Indeed universality of idea and individuality of character are his specialities. With all the versatility of a dramatic Proteus he changes himself into every character and enters into every condition of human nature. Myriad are the shapes and guises, but like the colours in a kaleidoscope, all so bright and clear, all so true to life, that in the words of Pope it is a sort of injury to call Shakespeare's characters by so distant a name as copies of Nature. Or, as Goethe would have it, "his characters are alike watches with dial-plates of transparent crystal ; they show you the hour like others, and the inward mechanism also is all visible.

It was not for nothing that Shakespeare's last hero was a master-magician, a universal charmer. Prospero is a significant symbol; but all its significance it does not explain enough. Rather, like Wordsworth's beautiful violet, half-seen, half-hidden, it only beautifully tantalises. For magic, however transfiguring from the simple Margo trick to the stupendous Rope trick is, after all, only a trick eerie and esoteric true, but a trick all the same. Shakespearian magic on the other hand, lies open and above-board in his plays and poetry for any one with the eye, the ear and the wit to understand. And for a second, all magic dies with the magician. A posthumous thaumaturgist is neither seen nor heard of. Yet Shakespeare's magic was not made much of in his life-time. He had caused a flutter in the dovecots of dramatists and poets, he had made them sit up and take notice ; but when all is said, he was one among the many, a tall poppy with whom others, even the tallest of the tall had to reckon but by no means surely a Triton among the minnows. His magic worked later, distance lent enchantment to the view and continues still to lend it. Already Shakespeareana has grown from a snowball into an avalanche and Shakespearolatry has become a regular religion.

Well, where vagueness is bliss it is folly to be clear. What he was, the greatest thinkers, critics and poets could not fathom. Goethe called him second only to God, Coleridge termed him million-mouthed, Wordsworth compared him to a mountain, and they all left it at that. Perhaps an Aristotle alone could place Shakespeare in a clear cut category and Aristotle flourished once in remote antiquity and is not going to flourish again. None-the-less gods and groundlings alike, or as Bottom would say, every mother's son of us, could enjoy the magic. Here is matter for all tastes, all prejudices, all predilections. Here is knowledge without tears, pleasure without sin, upliftment without penance.

Nor need you be taken aback at this funny farago of *panem et circenses*, church juxtaposed with cinema screen and religion brought to the Rialto. If you call it Gilbertain, well then so is life, at once topsyturvy and humorous. For what is life but a musical miscellany of pleasure and pain, high seriousness and hilarious laughter. And to this Shakespeare spoke with a voice deep as Prophet and high as Heaven. In this Shakespeare was a prophet. A peculiar prophet though, in that the man sang and did not preach except through music. More while he sat out the riddle of life and gave all the necessary clues, he did not care to solve it but left his Pericles, prince of Tyre, as a standing warning against daring Oedipuses. Enough that life has a harmony as the Spheres have theirs: this for angels, that for mortals. Life is a gigantic promenade concert with the whole world for its audience. They that stand still or go out of their way seeking the Primum Mobile, do so at their peril. This is what Shakespeare has sung and spoken through a megaphone as it were in his works with none of your Dantean defeatism but with right apostolic fervour.

Hence it is that Shakespeare's gayest comedies are interspersed with scenes and interludes of solemn seriousness and civil-suited melancholy and his tragedies of the deepest pathos are chock-a-block with passages and part singings of scintillating wit and side-splitting laughter. Hence too that crown comic character of all times, that mountain of flesh exuding wit at every pore, that brazen-browed, toledo-tongued Sir John Falstaff of Munchausenesque mendacity and Shavian cynicism. Indian *Bidushak* and Birbal in one, rolls his way through tragedies and comedies on end illustrating as if in person that life is one chiaroscuro of alternating light in shade, one fabric of which joy and sorrow are the warp and the woof.

Even a prophet was without honour in his land. Not so Shakespeare.

> His writing were confessed to be such
> As neither Man, nor Muse, can praise too much ;

and this was 'all men's sufferage.' He broke unities and usage, Priscian's head and princely genealogies and was the more applauded for that. 'Better a mechanic rule were stretched or broken than a great beauty were omitted,' said Dryden. "There is more beauty" said Addision, "in the words of a great genius who is ignorant of the rules of art, than in those of a little genius who

knows and observes them." Ignorant of the rules perhaps but by no means an ignoramous. For, though without a particular piece of Oxon parchment in his portfolio, he had yet won many a richer distinction in the University of Genius which had turned out Homer and Chaucer before and was later to turn out Balzac and Dickens *viz.*, the public street and the tavern where you read no books, the mighty bloodless substitute for life as Stevenson called them but the 'liveableness of life' in all the colours of the rainbow. Not that he did not know art, but that he knew it so well that he could conceal it too. 'He was master of an art which no one else could reach,' said Ben Jonson who was an artist if ever there was one. And that Sultan of Literature, Dr. Johnson, who has debunked many a fair reputation nobly won, wrote, 'He who has mazed his imagination in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language ; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world and a confessor predict the progress of the world ' More trenchant still is Lyttleton who in his *Dialogues of the Dead* said that Shakespeare's knowledge of the passions, the humours and the sentiments of mankind was so perfect and so perfectly expressed that if human nature were destroyed and no monument were left of it except his work, other beings might know what man was from those writings. Such was thrice sweet Shakespeare, 'honey-tongued' and 'mellifluous' of speech, sacharine of diction and of luscious imagination, all compact.

The world is prolific of authors and prolific authors are the order of the day. There are authors that amuse, authors that instruct, and authors that elevate, to say nothing of 'shilling shockers' and penny-a-liners beyond the pale. But authors who at once amuse, instruct and elevate are the salt of the earth. No wonder they are so rare, and, like all rare things of utility, they are precious as well. Free trade or economic nationalism, they have an international value and currency of their own. Quotas, pacts and restriction bind them not : they are heart-deep. For them, there exist neither snobbish segregations of class nor chauvinistc quarantines of country : they are cosmopolitans honoured with the freedom of every city of civilization. They go strong while they live : and when they have shuffled off their mortal coil they go stronger like Cæsar's spirit. To this privileged band belongs William Shakespeare. He has been more than three centuries dead. But he was an Elizabethan—the age of vim, valour

and wine, the 'water of life.' The older the wine, the better the bouquet they say. What about Shakespeare, then, the wine of life incarnate, whose bouquet persists still, dainty and delicious as ever ? A super-Voronoff for the mind and the spirit with hormones and hemoglobins all complete. Or a new version of Peter Pen, ever young himself and making others young too. A modern poet has written :

> Revolving years have flitted on'
> Corroding Time has done its worst,
> Pilgrim and worshipper have gone
> From Avon's shrine to shrines of dust ;
> But Shakespeare lives unrivall'd still
> And unapproached by mortal mind.
> The giant of Parnassus' hill,
> The pride, the monarch of mankind.

Great praise this ! Yet, not enough. For though he bestrides the narrow world like a colossus, neither the men who walk under his huge legs are all petty, nor do his admirers whose name is legion peep about to find themselves dishonourable graves. Ben Jonson and Milton, Carlyle and Quincey, Goethe and Schiller, were giants themselves, but they acknowledged and acclaimed him their 'Big Brother.' And far from finding themselves dishonourable graves they lived and learned, poured libations and burnt incense at his shrine and were inspired to works of immortality. Though monarch of mankind, this is no ordinary monarchy. For, while thrones may totter to the dust, crowns tumble in the mire, and kings wander jobless–the War aftermath has sent many perambulating the capitals of Europe—Shakespeare on his pedestal in the valhalla of Literature will stand firm and foursquare, swaying generation after generation of scholars and savants, critics and connoisseurs, hermits and hero-worshippers alike." —*D. S. Varshney.*

### 2. *Dramatic Faculty.*

"Many dramatic writers of different ages are capable, occasionally, of breaking out, with great fervour of genius, in the natural language of strong emotion. No writer of antiquity is more distinguished for abilities of this kind than Euripides. His whole heart and soul seem torn and agitated by the force of the passion he imitates. He ceases to be Euripides ; he is Medea ; he is Orestes. Shakespeare, however, is most eminently distinguished, not only by these occasional sallies, but by imitating the passion in all its aspects, by pursuing it through all its windings and laby-

rinths, by moderating or accelerating its impetuosity according to the influence of other principles and of external events, and finally by combining it in a judicious manner with other passions and propensities, or by setting it aptly in opposition. He thus unites the two essential powers of dramatic invention, that of forming characters and that of imitating in their natural expressions, the passions and affections of which they are composed."
—*W. Richardson.*

### 3. *Nature versus Art.*

"He was an eminent instance of the truth of that rule, *Poeta non fit sed nascitur ;* one is not *made*, but *born* a poet. Indeed, his learning was very little, so that, as Cornish diamonds are not polished by any lapidary, but are pointed and smoothed even as they are taken out of the earth, so nature itself was all the *art* which was used upon him.

Many were the wit-combats betwixt him and Ben Jonson ; which too I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man of war; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning ; solid but slow in his performances. Shakespeare with the Englishman of war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quicknessof his wit and invention."—*Thomas Fuller.*

"If ever any author deserved the name of an *original*, it was Shakespeare. Homer himself drew not his art so immediately from the fountains of Nature ; it proceeded through Egyptian strainers and channels, and came to him not without some tincture of the learning, or some cast of the models, of those before him. The poetry of Shakespeare was inspiration ideed; he is not so much an imitator as an instrument of Nature : and it is not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him." —*Alexander Pope.*

"Shakespeare came out of Nature's hand like Pallas out of Jove's head, at full growth and mature." —*George Colman.*

### 4. *Truth and Variety of Character.*

"His *characters* are so much Nature herself, that 'tis a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as copies of her. Those of other poets have a constant resemblance, which shows that they received them from one another, and were but multipliers of the same image; each picture, like a mock rainbow, is but the reflection of a reflection. But every single character in Shakespeare is as much an individual as those in life itself ; it is as

impossible to find any two alike; as much as from their relation or affinity in any respect appear most to be twins, will upon comparison be found remarkably distinct. To this life and variety of character we must add the wonderful preservation of it, which is such throughout his plays, that, had all the speeches been printed without the very names of the persons, I believe one might have applied them with certaintyto every speaker." *Alexander Pope.*

"His plays alone are properly expressions of the passions, not descriptions of them. His characters are real beings of flesh and blood; they speak like men, not like authors."—*William Hazlitt.*

### 5. *Powers of Insight and Imagination.*

"Shakespeare is as astonishing for the exuberance of his genius in abstract notions and for the depth of his analytic and philosophic insight, as for the scope and minuteness of his poetic imagination. It is as if into a mind poetical in *form* there had been poured all the *matter* that existed in the mind of his contemporary Bacon. In Shakespeare's plays we have thought, history, exposition, philosophy, all within the round of the poet."

—*David Masson.*

"Through all the forenoon of our triumphant day till the utter consummation and ultimate ascension of dramatic poetry incarnate and transfigured in the master-singer of the world, the quality of his tragedy was as that of Marlowe's broad, single and intense; large of hand, voluble of tongue, direct of purpose. With the dawn of its latter epoch a new power comes upon it, to find clothing and expression in new forms of speech and after a new style. The language has put off its foreign decorations of lyric and elegiac ornament; it has found already its infinite gain in the loss of those sweet superfluous graces which encumbered the march and enchained the utterance of its childhood. The figures which it invests are now no more types of a single passion, the incarnations of a single thought. They now demand a scrutiny which tests the power of a mind and tries the value of a judgment; they appeal to something more than the instant apprehension which sufficed to respond to the immediate claim of those that went before them. Romeo and Juliet were simply lovers, and their names bring back to us no further thought than of their love and the lovely sorrow of its end; Antony and Cleopatra shall be before all things lovers, but the thought of their love and its triumphant tragedy shall recall other things beyond number—all the forces and fortunes of mankind, all the consequence that waited on their imperial passion, the infinitive

variety of qualities and powers wrought together and welded into the frame and composition of that love which shook from end to end all nations and kingdoms of the earth.—*A. C. Swinburne.*

6. *Humanity*

"What I admire in Shakespeare, however, is that his loves are all human—no earthliness hiding from itself in sentimental transcendentalism—no loves of the angels, which are least angelic things, I believed, that float in the clouds, though they do look down upon mortal feelings with contempt just as the dark volumes of smoke which issue from the long chimney of a manufactory might brood very sublimely over the town which they blacken, and fancy themselves far more ethereal than those vapours which steam up from the earth by day and night. Yet these are pure water, and those are destined to condense in black soot. So are the transcendentalisms of affection. Shakespeare is healthy, true to Humanity in this...You always know, that you are on an earth which has to be refined, instead of floating in the empyrean with wings of wax. Therein he is immeasurably greater than Shelley. Shelleyism is very sublime, sublimer a good deal than God, for God's word is all wrong and Shelley is all right–much purer than Christ, for Shelley can criticise Christ's heart and life—nevertheless Shelleyism is only atmospheric profligacy, to coin a Montgomeryism. I believe this to be one of Shakespeare's most wondrous qualities – the humanity of his nature and heart. There is a spirit of sunny endeavour about him, and an acquiescence in things as they are—not incompatible with a cheerful resolve to make them better".

—*F. W. Robertson.*

7. *Magic of Expression.*

"Let me have the pleasure of quoting a sentence about Shakespeare, which I met with by accident not long ago in the *Correspondent*, a French review which not a dozen English people, I suppose, look at. The writer is praising Shakespeare's prose. 'With Shakespeare's', he says, 'prose comes in whenever the subject, being more familiar, is unsuited to the majestic English iambic.' And he goes on: 'Shakespeare is the king of poetic rhythm and style, as well as the king of the realm of thought, along with his dazzling prose. Shakespeare has succeeded in giving us the most varied, the most harmonious verse which has ever sounded upon the human ear since the verse of the Greekss.' M. Henry Cochin, the writer of this sentence, deserves our

gratitude for it ; it would not be easy to praise Shakespeare, in a single sentence, more justly." —*M. Arnold*.

*8. Humour.*

"Shakespeare illustrates every phase and variety of humour : a complete analysis of Shakespeare's humour would make a system of psychology."

**Elizabethan Stage**

Originally a scaffold was set up either in the churchyard, or market place for the performance of a religious play, but for a secular play the inn-yard was chosen. The inn-yard resembled the quad of a small college or almshouse—it was surrounded by rooms, and had an open gallery running round it, on which the doors of the chambers on the upper floor open.

This was practically the model of the theatre that Burbage built on the site of the dissolved priory of Holywell in Shoredith in London in 1576. He however, made the yard a circular one, like the bear-baiting and bull-baiting rings already existing on the other side of the Thames in Southwark. This led Shakespeare to speak of his theatre 'as this wooden O.' Before the end of the century several more play-houses on more or less the same model sprang up. In 1598 Richard and Cuthbert, sons of Burbage, built the famous Globe in which most of Shakespeare's plays were performed.

From existing fascimiles and many scattered references of the time we can fairly reconstruct the Elizabethan stage. The circular yard, which corresponds to 'the pit,' was open to the sky, surrounded by three tiers of galleries, and having an oblong stage raised upon trestles projecting from one side almost into the middle of the area. The players were thus surrounded by spectators. The highly priced seats were in the gallery behind the stage in a private box, called "the lords' room." The uppermost gallery was roofed with thatch of tiles, and the stage was partly covered with provision to carry off the rain.

The stage was sometimes a movable platform, as we have said above. At the back of the stage was a screen in which were two doorways, opening out of the actor's retiring room; between them—was a third door hidden by a curtain, which formed the back-ground of the stage. The expression 'behind the arras' (where Polonius, *e. g.*, in *Hamlet* lay in hiding) points to this curtain at the back of the stage. Behind the curtain was a recess, which could be used as an inner scene to represent *e. g.*, the

tomb of Juliet, or the bed-chamber of Desdemona. It was immediately below the upper stage. The upper stage was used to represent the battlements of a castle wall, the upper storey of a house, the balcony of Juliet's bedroom, or any scene described as above in stage directions.

The arras or the back-ground could be used to indicate scenery by means of crude pictures painted on cloth. At any rate what little scenery was used was of a very primitive kind. M. Jusserand points out that Shakespeare made up for the 'deficiency of the scenery by his wonderful descriptions of landscapes, castles, and wild moors.' If Shakespeare had painted scenery at his command, we would have lost much of his fine descriptive poetry. Theatrical property was however, liberally put into requisition, as we learn from the account books of the Elizabethan times. The allusions in Ben Jonson's Prologue to *Every Man in His Humour* are significant–for he says he would have no

"roll'd bullet heard,
To say it thunders ; nor tempestuous drum
Rumbles, to tell you when the storm doth come."

Large sums of money were spent on the costumes of the players. But the costume was Elizabethan, there being no idea to reproduce the costume of the period in which the play was set. "Shakespeare was no archaeologist ; as the mediæval artist who gave us the wall paintings and sculpture of our churches represented Pilate's Roman soldiers in plate armour, so his Romans, in *Coriolanus*, for example, carry pistols, are put in the stocks, say grace before meat and generally behave and look like the Elizabethans who watched them perform."

All the female parts were played by men and boys in women's dress. On this point the lines, spoken by Portia (*Merchant of Venice*, III. iv. 62-68) make an oblique comment :

"I'll hold thee any wager,
When we are both accoutred like young men,
I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,
And wear my dagger with the brave grace,
And speak between the change of man and boy
With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps,
Into a manly stride."

It seems incredible that boys with 'cracked' voice could do justice to such parts as those of Lady Macbeth, Volumnia. Cleopatra at any rate seems to lament before her death that 'some *squeaking* Cleopatra' will 'boy' her greatness.

## INTRODUCTION TO HAMLET

### Date and Text of Hamlet

The text of *Hamlet* is drawn from the Quarto of 1604, known as Q. 2, and the First Folio of 1623. The first Quarto was published in 1603. It was a printed text. Dover Wilson writes, "Ever since its discovery in 1821 critics have been debating its origin and composition to which they have strangely devoted far more attention than to those of the two good texts. There are many theories ; but on one point they all seem now to be agreed, namely that whatever may have been the nature of the piracy and however the pirate procured his copy, the book is in large measure based upon a memorised report of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as performed in 1601 or 1602 on the Globe stage."

The First Quarto was entered on the Stationers' Register on July 29, 1602 and published the following year with the title-page :

"The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, *Prince of Denmarke*, by William Shakespeare. As it hath been diverse times acted by his Highnesse servantes in the Cittie of London ; as also in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elsewhere. At London printed for N. L., and John Trundell, 1603."

The second Quarto, dated 1604, has the following title page :

"The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, *Prince of Denmarke*, by William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie. At London, Printed by I. R for N. L , and are to be sold at his shop under Saint Dunston's Church in Fleet Street, 1604."

There is material difference between the first Quarto and the second Quarto. The first Quarto has 2143 lines, and the second Quarto, 3719 lines. Many passages, marked by "that blending of psychological insight with imagination and fancy", which is Shakespeare's own, are missing in the first Quarto ; so in the first Quarto lines appear to be misplaced or maimed, words and phrases distorted ; then there is confusion in the order of scenes, and the names of some of the *characters* differ in subsequent editions. The Queen's innocence which is little doubted is another thing as much as her participation in the plots against her guilty husband.

Opinion is divided as to the relation of the two Quartos. The first Quarto might be a imperfect production of an old *Hamlet*, written by Shakespeare in his youth, and revised later. Some think that both the First and Second Quartos represent the same version, and whatever the difference, it has been a matter of bungling and negligence. Others again think that the First Quarto is a garbled version of an old play of *Hamlet*, written by some other dramatist, and recast by Shakespeare about the year 1602. So it is concluded that Quarto 1 represents Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the intermediate stage ; Quarto 2 the complete metamorphosis. This seems to be a solution of the problem.

The date of the play must necessarily be fixed within the limits of the First Qarrto and Second Quarto. If the view stated above is taken, the play might have been revised about 1603. Going by the entry on the Stationers' Register, the First Quarto should belong to about 1601. In any case a version of *Hamlet*, known as Shakespeare's was in existence before 1602. Another point to note is that the play is not mentioned in Mere's *Palladis Tamia*, 1598. Evidence of the date has been discovered inside the play (Act II. Sc. ii.):

*Hamlet* How chances it they travel ? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

*Rosencrantz*. I think *their* inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

In 1601 Shakespeare's Company was out of favour, perhaps because of its involvement in the Essex Conspiracy. Secondly, during this year the children of the Chapel Royal were in favour, and they were acting at Blackfriars. At the end of the year the Globe Company was "travelling" *i. e.*, on tour in the provinces. *Inhibition* may mean prohibition of theatrical performances by authorities or non-residence, and *Innovation* may mean a political change or the popularity of the company of children. The internal evidence of the play seems to confirm the date arrived at independently.

**Sources of the Play**

The story of Hamlet comes from the *Historia Denica* of Saxo Grammaticus, who lived at the close of the twelfth century. It is the most striking of Saxo's mythical hero stories, and is contained in the third and fourth books. Saxo's book was first printed in 1514. Goethe sensed the dramatic possibilities of the

Hamlet story, and had a mind to dramatize it. The story seems to have been well known throughout the North in the fifteenth century—it "trolled far and wide in popular song."

In 1570 Belleforest translated it into French, and it appeared in the fifth volume of his *Histories Tragiques*. A black-letter English rendering of the story is also extant, but it is dated 1603 – and betrays the influence of the play upon itself. Shakespeare could not, therefore, been indebted to the English rendering, but he was certainly acquainted with the French version.

In Saxo's *Amleth* there is the outline of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—the father is murdered by the uncle ; the mother marries the murderer ; the son feigns madness in order to execute revenge ; there are vague hints of Ophelia and Polonius ; mother and son meet—and then the son sails to England—all these familiar details are in the old tale. The story has been resurrected as an Elizabethan Revenge play, and there are the ghost, the play scene, and the play ends with the death of the hero and others more or less concerned.

Shakespeare might have got a hint or two from Belleforest. Belleforest refers to Amleth's 'over-great melancholy', which seems to have influenced Shakespeare's own conception of Hamlet's character. Secondly. Belleforest tells us that Gerath (Amleth's mother) and Fengon (Amleth's uncle) had committed adultery before Amleth's father was murdered. This was not lost sight of by Shakespeare in his play.

There is a lost *Hamlet*, ascribed to Kyd. It was once very popular. Kyd's *Hamlet* was a typical "blood and thunder" tragedy, with its evenge motive, Senecan rhetoric and moralizing and multiplying horrors. Shakespeare might have been asked by his Company to *turn out* a rival *Hamlet*. He could not but have been partially influenced by Kyd's *Hamlet* as well as by his *Spanish Tragedy*, the latter reversing the motive of *Hamlet* (the father seeking to avenge the murder of the son) but otherwise having the supernatural element and the play within the play. There are none of the crudities of the *Spanish Tragedy* present in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. On the other hand we find a development of character and incident, on a new line, a finer treatment of the supernatural, and a true blending of tragic passion and pathos.

Dover Wilson is led to think that Claudius is essentially an Italianate character. It is poison, administered by Claudius,

that kills Hamlet's father in a garden. The art of poisoning was elaborately practised in Italy in those days. The crooked policy, the insinuating address, the spying, the secret poisoning, etc., so characteristic of Claudius might have been suggested by an Italian original.

Dover Wilson writes, "Of the circumstances and method of the murder of Hamlet's father, upon which so much hangs, and which are twice detailed, first in the account the Ghost renders of his own death, and again in the Gonzago play, or rather in the dumb-show that proceeds it, there is no hint in either Saxo or Belleforest. 'The Danish story does not mention poison, sleep or orchard. On the contrary Belleforest expressly states that the deed was done by bloody violence in the banqueting-hall of the palace, while Amleth's father sat at meals. On the other hand, the *Murder of Gonzago* bears all the marks of being founded upon an Italian original, and I see no reason for doubting that Hamlet's words at III. ii. 262, 'the story is extant and written in very choice Italian,' were substantially correct. Indeed, there are even indications of a historical foundation for the tale, since according to Dowden, 'In 1538 the Duke of Urbino, married to a Gonzago, was murdered by Lingi Gonzago, who dropped poison into his ear.' What more likely than that Shakespeare or Kyd used a scene from a contemporary play upon his subject for his play scene and in order to make the resemblance exact, altered the Hamlet-story to suit the story of Gonzago ?"

**Saxo's Story and Hamlet**

The story of Hamlet is older than Saxo's. Saxo lived at the close of the twelfth century, and Shakespeare got the story from him. Some two hundred years before Saxo there is some allusion to Hamlet in Icelandic literature, and even to this day *Amlothe* (*i. e.*, Hamlet) is synonymous with 'fool' among the folk there. It was originally a Saga. Dover Wilson writes, "The origin of the story of Hamlet is lost in the mists of antiquity, through which, mingled as it were with sea-spray, we can dimly perceive the common ancestors of the English and Scandinavian races moving in their long ships about the southern shores of the Baltic and across the high seas that divided the Norwegian fiords from Iceland" The feigned madness of Hamlet is traced to the original Saxo, part of the name *Amlothe* suggesting 'mad.' Some scholars suppose that the Hamlet saga is a northern

version of the tale of Brutus, the points of similarity between the two being so evident.

Saxo seems to have given the story colour and form—and it is interesting to note how Shakespeare's genius transforms it into a fascinating psychological study, in which the human element is no less pronounced. First, Saxo's story : Horvendil and Fengon were two brothers, ruling jointly Jutland under Rorik, King of Denmark. Horvendil married Gerutha, daughter of Rorik, and had a son, Amleth, by her. Fengon, getting jealous of his brother, murdered Horvendil and married Gerutha. Amleth might have shared his father's fate, to escape which he feigned madness, and at the same time he secretly plotted revenge. Fengon was suspicious and tried to find out whether his madness was genuine.

First, an interview was arranged between Amleth and a beautiful girl, his foster-sister, with whom he was in love ; it was thought that Amleth might give the show away here. But Amleth had been forewarned by a friend—and he did not fall into the trap.

Then on the suggestion of one of the king's advisers an interview was held between Almeth and his mother Gerutha in which he was an eaves-dropper. Amleth, who suspected the plot, behaved most wildly on entering his mother's room ; then he accidentally discovered the eaves-dropper, and killed him. He reproached his mother violently, and told her that his madness was merely feigned to accomplish revenge, and the result was that the mother came over to his side.

Fengon now sent Amleth to England with two attendants, bearing letters with instructions for the King of England to put Amleth to Death. Amleth altered the letters and put his two companions to death. He returned to Denmark after a year's absence. He was in time to act as a butler at his own funeral feast. Amleth made the courtiers drunk, set fire to the palace, and killed his uncle with his sword. He spoke to the people exposing his uncle and justifying the measures he had taken ; he was hailed as successor to Fengon.

Certain points we should note in connection with Saxo's story. These points were developed and elaborated by Shakespeare. (1) Fengon's marriage with Gerutha was made to appear incestuous. In Shakespeare it is the cause of Hamlet's shattered

faith and constant brooding. (2) Amleth's feigned madness led to temporary lethargy ; this explains Hamlet's melancholy and inaction. (3) Amleth's speeches were marked by a mingling of craft and candour ; so Polonius says, "Though this be madness yet there is method in't," and Guildenstern speaks of his "crafty madness." (4) The use of Ophelia as a decoy and Polonius's eaves-dropping are a working out of the hint in Saxo. (5) The scene in Gertrude's bed-room is matched in Saxo. (6) The tampering with the letters by Hamlet on his voyage to England is a detail taken from Saxo. (7) There is an exchange of swords in Hamlet's encounter with Laertes ; and this seems to have been suggested by the incident that Amleth snatched Fengon's sword, and killed him with it when he found that his own sword had been tampered with.

Shakespeare takes the rough outline of the story from Saxo, but fills it in with new meaning and enriches it with details that give the play a profound human and psychological interest. The ghost, the play-scene are the usual stuff of the Elizabethan Revenge Play. Shakespeare legitimately uses them in *Hamlet*, but the very stability of them is a contrast to the crudeness of the Revenge play.

## The Lost Hamlet

There is a reason to believe that a play on Hamlet existed as early as 1598. Greene's *Menaphon* contains a summary of contemporary literature. The following passage refers to Hamlet :

"It is a common practice now a daies amongst a sort of shifting companions, that runne through every arte and thrive by none to leave the trade of *Noverint* (*i. e.*, attorney) whereto they were borne, and busie themselves with the endeavours of arte, that could scarcelie latinize their neck verse they should have needs ; yet English Seneca read by candlelight yield Maine good sentences, as *Blond is a beggar*, and so forth ; and if you intreate him faire in frostie morning he will afoord you whole *Hamlets*, I should say. Handfulls of tragic speeches. But O grief ! *Tempus edax rerum*, what is it that will last always ? The sea exaled by drops will in continuance be drie : and Senaca, let blond line by line, and page, by page at length must needs die to our stage."

The play did not so easily die. The entry in the diary of the actor, Philip Henslowe, is revealing :

"9 of June 1594...........

R[eceive]d at Hamlet. viijs."

The play was performed by the Lord Chamberlain's men, and it was the theatrical company, of which Shakespeare was a member.

There is another reference to the play in Lodge's *Wet's a Miserie* (1595)—"Hate Virtue is a foul lubber, and looks as pale as the wisard of the ghost, which cries so miserably at the theatre, like an oyster-wife, *Hamlet revenge.*"

We come across other allusions to the older Hâmlet, dating from the early years of the seventeenth century—(1) Dekker's *Satiroinastix* (1602)—"My Name's Hamlet revenge." (2) *Westward Ho* (1607)—"Let these husbands play mad *Hamlet*; and cry revenge." (3) Rowland's *The Night Raven* (1618)—"I will not cry *Hamlet Revenge.*" We may note also a comic passage in *The Looking Glass for London and England*, written by Lodge and Greene, probably before 1589: Adam, the Smith's man, exclaims thus to the clown: "Alas, sir, your father,—why, sir, methinks I see the gentleman still: a proper youth he was, faith, aged some forty and ten; his beard rat's colour, half black, half white; his nose was in the highest degree of noses." It reads like a burlesque of *Hamlet*, Act I. Sc. ii. 184—240.

Thomas Kyd is supposed to be the author of the play, alluded to in the passages quoted above. An interesting point is that Kyd's father was in all probability a sort of *Noverint*. Kyd's *Hamlet* is not extant, but Hamlet and Hieronimo (a character in *The Spanish Tragedy*, who went mad) were often mentioned together—and their parts were taken by the same actors. Compare Burbage's elegy :—

> Young Hamlet, Hieronimo,
> Kind heir, the grieved Moore, and more beside
> That liv'd in him, have now for ever died.

Sometimes the two plays were confused. Armin in his *Nest of Ninnies* (1608) writes—"There are, as Hamlet saies, things cold whips in store;" Hieromino certainly says so in the most famous passage of *The Spanish Tragedy*.

*Hamlet* and *The Spanish Tragedy* are both dramas of vengeance. The ghost of the victim tells his story in the one play as in the other. The heroes feign madness, and there is a faithful Horatio in each play. A play-scene brings about the catastrophe in both plays. Nemesis involves in its meshes the innocent as well as the guilty. *Titus Andronicus* belongs to the same category. Kyd translated into English, from the French, Garnier's Sene-

can drama entitled *Cornelia*. We may note here the thoroughly Senecan sentiment, as uttered by the Queen :

> Thou know'st 'tis common ; all that live must die,
> Passing through nature to eternity (Act I. Sc. ii. 72-73).

it occurs almost verbatim in *Cornelia*.

## The German Hamlet

A German Mss. version, bearing the date, "Pretz. October, 27th, 1710," preserves some portion of the pre-Shakesperian *Hamlet*. It might be a modernized copy of a much older manuscript. The title is : *Der Bestrafte Brudermord Oder Prinz Hamlet aus Dannemarck* (*Fratricide Punished*, or *Prince Hamlet of Denmark*.) It was first printed in 1781, and had been frequently reprinted. The text, with an English translation is given in Cohu's work—"Shakespeare in Germany in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries : An account of English Actors in Germany and the Netherlands and of the plays performed by them during the same period." (London, 1865).

The earliest record of a performance of *Hamlet a Princz in Dennemarck* is dated 1626. In connection with the subject of *Hamlet* may be noted the visit of Lord Leicester's servants to Denmark in 1585. Kempe, Bryan and Pope, three of the company, later joined the Chamberlain's company, and were actors in Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare's remarkable knowledge of Danish manners and customs, as displayed in *Hamlet*, must have been obtained from these friends of his.

*Fratricide Punished* might have little value of its own but two points are noteworthy—(1) Polonius, as in the first quarto, is here represented by Corambus, and (2) a prologue goes with the play in which appear such character as *Night*, *Alecto*, *Thisiphone Miegera*. It may be presumed that this throughly Senecan Prologue represents a fragment of the pre-Shakespearian play to which frequent allusions are made.

## Time of Action

Marshall (*Study of Hamlet*) has the following scheme of time :

| | |
|---|---|
| Day 1 | Act I Scenes 1—3. |
| Day 2 | Act I Scenes 4—5. Interval, about two months. |
| Day 3 | Act II |
| Day 4 | Act III and Act IV Scenes 1—3. |
| Day 5 | Act IV Scene 4. Interval about two months. |
| Day 6 | Act IV Scenes 5—7. Interval, two days. |
| Day 7 | Act V Scene 2. |

Daniel's scheme differs a little from this. He reduces the interval between days 5 and 6 to about a week; admits of no interval between days 6 and 7, and gives one day for the whole of Act 5.

Dowden gives a detailed analysis of the time of action. "The duration of the action in the play presents difficulties. It opens at midnight with the change of sentinels. Next day Horatio and Marcellus, with Bernardo, inform Hamlet of the appearance of the Ghost; it cannot be the forenoon, for Hamlet salutes Bernardo with "Good even, sir". On the night of this day Hamlet watches and meets his father's ghost. The season of the year is perhaps March; the nights are bitter cold. The second Act occupies part of one day. Polonius despatches Reynaldo to Paris, Ophelia enters alarmed by Hamlet's visit, her father reads Hamlet's letter, the players arrive, and when Hamlet parts from them, his words are, "I'll leave you till to-night." But before this day arrives, two months have elapsed since Hamlet was enjoined to revenge the murder—it was two months since his father'sdeath when the play opened, and now it is "twice two months." Next day Hamlet utters his soliloquy, "To be or not to be," encounters Ophelia as arranged by Polonius, gives his advice to the players, is present at the preformance of the play; and night having come, he pleads with his mother, and again sees his father's spirit. Here the third Act closes, but the action proceeds without interruption, the King inquires for the body of Polonius, and tells Hamlet that the bark is ready to bear him to England. We must suppose that it is morning when Hamlet meets the troops of Fortinbras. Two days previously the ambassadors from Norway had returned, with a request that Claudius would permit Fortinbras to march through Denmark against the Poles. Fortinbras himself must have arrived almost as soon as the ambassadors, and obtained the Danish king's permission. In IV. v. Ophelia appears distracted, Laertes has returned from Paris to be revenged for Polonius's death. An interval of time must have passed since Hamlet sailed for England —an interval sufficient to permit Laertes to receive tidings of the death of Polonius and to reach Elsinore. In the next scene letters arrive announcing that Hamlet is again in Denmark; before he was two days at sea, he became the pirates' prisoner. On the day of the arrival of letters Ophelia is drowned. Her flowers indicate that the time is early June. Ophelia's burial and Hamlet's death take place on the next day. Yet the time has been sufficient for Fortinbras to win his Polish victory and be again at Elsinore, and for ambassadors to return fromEngland announcing the execution

of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. We might obligingly imagine that the pirate ship conveying Hamlet to Denmark was delayed by baffling winds, but his letters are written after he has landed, and they describe his companions as holding their course for England."

**Construction of the Play**

The opening of Hamlet is highly imaginative and artistic with all the suggestion of mystery and unspoken horror. The midnight, the changing of guards, the expected hour of the ghost's visit, the bitter cold, the brooding gloom and silence at once grip our minds. The atmosphere is terse, and the ghost makes his visit. Horatio being a scholar addresses the ghost, but the ghost makes no answer, and strides away majestically. After the ghost is gone, there is speculation among the three—Bernardo, Horatio and Marcellus about the reason of the ghost walking the earth. And the ghost, as reported by those who have seen him, resembles the lately deceased father of Hamlet. The exposition seems to be almost completed in this scene. There is a hint of something rotten in the state of Denmark :—

The second scene presents Hamlet to us—a notable figure, dressed in black, detached and keeping unto himself. The king's unctuous speech and self-gratulation irritate Hamlet. The state business—the sending ambassadors to Norway—does not concern us much here, but the political issue, already hinted in the opening scene, though having very little to do with the plot of the play, is linked up with it. From Hamlet's soliloquy, immediately following the break-up of the council, it appears that he has been brooding over something—his mother's too hasty marriage ; it shows lechery in his mother—a marriage with his father's brother, in himself a contemptible fellow, compared to her late husband. The revenge motive is not yet broached. When Horatio enters and tells Hamlet of the appearance of his father's ghost, Hamlet's reaction is to be noted :

> My father's spirit in arms, all is not well ;
> I doubt some foul play.

The third scene is a scene of domestic life at the house of Polonius. There is an undertone of pathos regarding the position of Ophelia. Polonius brings the taint of hypocrisy and intrigue into his domestic life, and his children are the worse for Ophelia suffers the most, bullied and lectured as she is, between father and brother, both smugly self-righteous. The fourth and fifth scenes stem from the second scene. The ghost's revelations con-

firm Hamlet's suspicion and deepen his mistrust of woman, for his own mother is a living example of woman's depravity. The revenge motive now enters the play.

Hamlet's delay in executing the revenge has puzzled many critics. But it will not do to overlook that in a revenge play, the revenge is postponed till the end, and, therefore, delay is a necessary part of it. Shakespeare has got to follow the convention of the revenge play. What he does in his original way is to *rationalize* the delay. The thought of revenge is never allowed to slip out of his mind, while the bloody deed itself is put off to the distant future. Feigned madness is again one of the tricks of the revenge play. And we find Hamlet confiding in Horatio and requesting him to take no notice of him if he puts an antic disposition on.

When we get to the second Act, first scene has little to do with Hamlet except that Polonius, fatuous as he is in council and action, seems to see a light, piercing into the mystery in which Hamlet has wrapt himself. This scene harks back to the third scene of the first Act in which we learn that Hamlet has importuned Ophelia with love in honourable fashion. We may note now its developments. The father forbids the daughter to have anything to do with Hamlet's "tenders.' In the meantime Hamlet's madness has maniefsted itself, and Ophelia has been a personal witness to his wild behaviour. Polonius readily discovers the truth about Hamlet; love-rejected has made him mad. He communicates it to the king. The king is not very much convinced. He is worried about Hamlet's gloom and sullenness.

Things are now getting complicated. First, the king has his own suspicion about Hamlet, and summons Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two of Hamlet's school-fellows, to spy on him. A diversion is created by Polonius's too positive assurance to the king that Hamlet's madness has been caused by rejected love. It does not lull the king's suspicion ; but instead of taking any immediate step, he follows the policy of wait and see. Hamlet too plays the king's game—wait and see. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern meet Hamlet and attempt to pump him out, he puts them off with flighty and wild speeches. Then the players arrive—and it is a further cause of delay, and there is rationalizing again. Hamlet has doubts about the ghost. The ghost might be an evil spirit, assuming his father's shape to tempt him to evil. As he plans, the players can provide the opportunity of testing the truth of the ghost's words. While the revenge remains un-

executed, the thought of it seems to prey on Hamlet's mind.

The end of the second Act is now reached. As we closely follow the turn of events, we do not seem to be conscious of the delay in the execution of revenge. Rather, Hamlet's soliloquy at the end of the second Act sharply reminds us of it. Now self-reproaches which punctuate Hamlet's soliloquies are also a feature of the revenge play. By this time Hamlet's madness becomes a major concern to the King and Queen. The probings of Hamlet by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern yield no result. The king, however, is always on the alert, and now proceeds to test Polonius's theory about Hamlet's madness. In the first scene of the third Act occurs Hamlet's famous soliloquy—"To be or not to be," its relevancy has been questioned. In his interview with Ophelia he plays the part of a mad man to satisfaction. If there is so much of cynicism in his speeches, the reason lies in his perception of the whole trick—and the shocking realization that Ophelia has gone over to the enemy's camp, added to his already shaken faith in womankind. Ophelia is deeply affected by the interview. The king now decides to send Hamlet to England. Events seem to be moving too fast. Hamlet has little chance of executing the revenge ; the king is too swift for him.

There seems to be a division of interest in the second scene of the Act. Hamlet's dramatic criticism (and it may be taken as Shakespeare's own mav appear to be out of place, as it retards the action of the play. But it is made to blend with the revenge motive. "The play's the thing." Hamlet takes care that the speech he has interpolated, is properly delivered ; there is the necessityof his minute instructions to the actors. The play-scene is the climax. The king acts continuously and deliberately as now the clash of purposes between the king and Hamlet has come to ahead. In the third scene Hamlet stumbles upon the king at prayers. He might have at once dispatched him as his first impulse was. Critics imagine that he should have taken this opportune moment to kill the king after his solemn resolve in his soliloquy at the end of the second scene. Supposing Hamlet had satisfied the critics by killing Claudius at this moment, the drama would have taken a different turn with Hamletundisposed of. But the motive given by Hamlet for sparing Claudius should not be ignored. Hamlet would but send Claudius to heaven by killing him when he was praying. It would be no revenge.

In his interview with his mother in the next scene he

sharply reproaches his mother and seems to bring her to her senses. The cry of Polonius behind the scene interrupts him. Supposing the king is eaves-dropping, he rushes upon Polonius with his sword drawn, and kills him. Critics seize upon his words, addressed to the ghost:

> That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
> The important acting of your dread command.

And they say that Hamlet is "unapt" for revenge. If Claudius had been in the place of Polonius, Hamlet would have now made an end of him—and his revenge would have been accomplished. The impression of delay, as we have pointed out above, is an illusion for which Hamlet's soliloquies and self-reproaches are largely responsible.

The killing of Polonius proves a turning point. Critics henceforth can complain no more of delay. In fact Hamlet is allowed no respite. He is shipped off to England. The letters are substituted and the result is that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are put to death on their arrival in England. The king's agents are first dispatched. There remains the king, and his turn is to come. Polonius's death brings in serious complications. First, Ophelia goes mad. Secondly, Laertes comes back in secret from Paris.

> Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
> And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
> With pestilent speeches his father's death.

Laertes stirs up people to rebellion, puts himself at their head, and bursts into the royal presence. The king wins him over. However the reported death of Ophelia provokes him, he is willing to co-operate with the king to get satisfaction for the murder of his father. In the fourth Act there is one event, namely, the free passage of the troops of Fortinbras through Denmark for the invasion of Poland—which is linked up with the main action of the play in the last scene. Hamlet on his way to England is captured by pirates, and so is brought back to England.

The fifth Act opens with a grave-yard scene. Hamlet and Horatio stroll in there. The counter-plot for the treacherous murder of Hamlet in the fencing match is concocted between the king and Laertes. The plan is that Laertes will choose an "unbated" sword, the point being tipped with a deadly poison and the king will keep ready a poisoned drink for Hamlet.

Hamlet is haunted by vague *forebodings.* In the grave-yard scene Hamlet indulges in morbid reflections and jests with the grave-digger. It has been impugned by some critics. But it has a purpose—it relaxes as well as emphasizes the tragic tension.

Next Hamlet and Horatio watch the scene when the funeral procession, bearing Ophelia, approaches. Soon appear the King, the Queen, Laertes, and the mourners. Horatio's hysterical outburst draws Hamlet's attention to what it is all about, and it is followed by a scuffle between Laertes and Hamlet on the issue of Ophelia. The two are separated by attendants.

The second scene—the last scene of the play—finds Hamlet and Horatio together. Hamlet tells Horatio how he changed the king's commission, which ordered his death and sent Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their doom. Hamlet seems to have not the least qualm of conscience over it. Osric, a frippery lord announces the fencing match and the wager the King has laid on Hamlet. Hamlet is opressed by some vague forebodings, but all the same gets interested in the fencing match. There is a patched-up reconciliation between Hamlet and Laertes. Hamlet has no suspicion and easily falls a victim to the counter-plot. At the same time his revenge is accomplished. His procrastination has been blamed for the unnecessary death of so many—Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes, the Queen. Rosencrantz and Guildentern. Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern get killed for their meddling. Accident may be blamed for the death of Ophelia Their own misdeeds recoil on Laertes and the King. The King should be blamed for the death of the Queen.

**Some Inconsistencies in Hamlet**

A careful and objective analysis of the plot and action of *Hamlet* will reveal several inconsistencies. When we see the play on the stage, or read it in our closet, these inconsistencies may fail to be noticed—we are so carried away by the passion, imagination, poetry, the plumbing of the depth of human experience ; in fact the inconsistencies are lost in the multiplicity of the most intense and vivid impressions. The appearance of the ghost to the sentinels on duty would have strained our credulity, but for the depth of suggestion and terseness of atmosphere. Then how is it that Hamlet feigning madness, goes undetected ? The King is very sharp eyed and sharp-eared, but he too seems to be deluded. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are easily fooled. It looks strange that the King and Horatio never

meet and have a talk about Hamlet's madness. Of course the king could have elicited nothing from Horatio. Again how is that the Queen never suspects what the secret trouble of Hamlet is ? Even the dumb show, though it seems to bring conviction to Hamlet makes little difference for the king. All the details of the murder of Hamlet's father are re-enacted in the play-scene ; the king seems to stand the scene without wincing. Then the Queen does not see or hear the ghost while Hamlet talks to him. Ophelia is known to be mad, but she wanders about as she pleases. The fencing match is played with blunted foils. Hamlet only inquires whether these foils are of the same length. But he fails to notice that Laertes has taken up an "unbated" sword. These inconsistencies will strike a reader who carefully analyses the plot.

John Bailey writes, "Yet this all-compelling story has many defects and inconsistencies apart from the uncertainty about the character of the chief actor. Take, for instance, the character of Fortinbras. The play ends as do Shakespeare's tragedies end on the note of peace and with a leaving of the disordered world in the hands of plain and simple men who have played no great part in the story. This was partly, no doubt, for technical reasons; there was no curtain then, and dead bodies had to be got off some how and by somebody. But it is more than that. There is always, at the end, as Mr. Barker has said, 'a turning to the living future :' and I should add, more still, a desire for peace and calm and hope at the last. So Octavius speaks the last word of *Julius Caesar*, Malcolm of *Macbeth*, Albany of *Lear*. And here after everybody else is dead, the kingdom and its future are left to Fortinbras. But if we look back at the first scene of the first Act, we shall find it very surprising that the 'young Fortinbras' there described should be contentedly accepted as ruler of Denmark."

'Then how strange it is that the Ghost comes from Purgatory to talk to Hamlet, and yet when Hamlet speaks of what happens after death he seems to have no thought of Purgatory at all ! How strange that, where all the action takes place in Denmark and all the characters are Danes, they should continually speak of Denmark as if they were outside of it, and use the word Dane apparently as a term of reproach ; as when the Queen says, 'O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs !' and when Hamlet at the end addresses the king as 'thou incestuous murderous damned Dane !' How strange that Hamlet in the first

Act should hardly know by sight his apparently old and intimate friend, Horatio ; that he is "at school" in Act I and aged thirty in Act V ; that in the grave scene Horatio should apparently know little of Laertes, the brother of Ophelia and the son of the Court Chamberlain. There are instances every where of Shakespeare's indiffierence to consistency, but none anywhere odder than these, which are only specimens of many to be found in *Hamlet*. It is also curious, though not an inconsistency that he should have put the great saying—perhaps his greatest about kingship 'There's such divinity doth hedge a king', into the mouth of Claudius, almost the worst of all his bad kings."

"Yet these technical faults.........are little noticed either in the theatre or the closet, and they hardly detract at all from our delight and wonder at the poetry, greatness and truth of his extraordinary drama. In it, as in all the greatest creation of art, it is hard to say whether it is its naturalness or its poetry, its rendering of truth as well see it, or its, revealing of things in that truth which few see, its immanence, we may say, or its transcendence which is its supreme quality. In fact the two are inextricably mixed. We are at home in it ; we are in the world we live in every day. But we are also all the while in a world strangely greater, strangely more wonderful and more beautiful, than that of our experience."

### Varying Judgments upon the Play

*Hamlet*, whether we regard it as the greatest of Shakespeare's tragedies or not, has exercised most the thoughts of its readers. About no single play of Shkespeare has so much been written—and there seems to be no end to speculation as yet. The interpretation of *Hamlet* have been as various and conflicting as there are minds to interpret it. An honest-minded reader will encounter a veritable Babel of opinions and views. It is true that *Hamlet* and for the matter of that, any work of art, will have a personal appeal, and that every reader or critic will be entitle to his personal opinion. The worst of it is that some of these views because of the eminent position of their holders, distort the judgments of others. We may instance the opinions of Goethe and Coleridge about Hamlet. They have held the field for a long period, and later critics have simply echoed these two eminent critics, or played variations upon their opinions. Both Goethe and Coleridge read their own meanings into the play. T. S. Eliot writes, "These minds often find in *Hamlet* a vicarious existence for their own artistic realization. Such a

mind had Goethe, who made of Hamlet a Werther, and such had Coleridge, who made of Hamlet a Coleridge." It has been repeated *ad nauseam* that Hamlet is too weak for the task, imposed upon him, however there may be a palliative or extenuation in the circumstances that are against Hamlet, or in his high-strung sensibility, or his nice scrupulousness or his toying with revenge. In any case it represents Hamlet as a sentimental weakling, who merely wastes himself on fine speeches and who if the critics will fairly admit to themselves, will hardly do credit to the hero of a tragedy. Lately the character of Hamlet has been dissected by the psycho-analyst. But it is forgotten that the Elizabethan audience did not make a mystery of Hamlet, but rather enjoyed Hamlet's sharp and evasive wit that baffled Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the cynical sneer with which he repulsed Polonius, his ranting in Ophelia's grave and the triple murders in the last scene of the play. We should not imagine that the minds of the Elizabethan audience were haunted with "thoughts beyond the reaches of their souls" on seeing the play on the stage. The critics of the school of Goethe and Coleridge forget that Shakespeare fitted the story of Hamlet into the framework of a Revenge Play. The fact is that Shakespeare took up an old play that had gone down with the ringing curtain on the stage, and recast and rewrote it.

In studying the play the circumstances in which it was written, the nature of the play itself, and the character of the Elizabethan audience should not be left out of account. It is not, however, suggested that *Hamlet* is no more than a ranting melodrama, which could appeal most to the 'groundlings'. The story, while Kyd's version of it was no better than a ranting melodrama, was transformed and transfigured by the magic genius of Shakespeare.

> Age cannot wither, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety.

It is supposed that Shakespeare put his best into *Hamlet*. That may be true too. All the wealth of imagery and thought, all the resources of language and expression, all skill in melody, all the profundity of wisdom, all the values of shifting experience, have been extracted and distilled into *Hamlet*. The superb poetry of *Hamlet* alone seems to redeem the darkest cynicism which is so pointedly expressed in the play—a symptom of something rotten at the core of society.

We shall better understand the play by remembering that

Shakespeare keeps the motive and structure of the Revenge Play in the forefront. Delay in the execution of revenge is the very essence of the Revenge Play. The wild-goose chase of speculation has been started in explaining this delay. E. E. Stoll rightly remarks, "Because not only of the popular demand but of dramatic requirements, the ghost must still appear at the beginning, and the tragic deed be accomplished, as in all good revenge plays, ancient or modern, at the end. How, then, was the revenger to be occupied in the meantime ? As in the old *Hamlet*, of course—secretly, with intrigue and melancholy meditation, which to us seem not greatly to advance the business in hand (but must needs not too greatly advance it); and publicly, with a pretence to madness which to us seems to thwart it. But there these matters were, superficially at least, less unplausible. There the delay, though like Hieronimo, in *The Spanish Tragedy*, the hero reproached himself for it, was attributed to the king's being difficult of access, and the feigned madness was represented as a means to react him These motives, like others that the dramatist found in his sources, he deliberately omitted (for a poor explanation only creates a need of explanation) ; and, as in *Othello and Macbeth*, he had recourse to manoeuvring. In a play that bore such a title and kept to the old story, he could not, without the plainest indication, which he has not provided, shake off the Senecan tradition, and, prompted by this unusal opportunism, he turned that tradition to account. Profiting by the familiarity of feigned madness as an artifice and a natural employment of the revenger at court, not only in the old *Hamlet*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and his own *Titus Andronicus*, but also in the legends of the elder Brutus at the court of Tarquin, and of David at that of Achish, king of Gath—"And he changed his behaviour before them and feigned himself mad in their hands"—he passed lightly ; carrying the audience with him, over the reasons of it here :

As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on ,—

only by the time they are to see him again, the hero has put it on already. The dramatist taking it as a matter of course, the audience would so take it, and not, like the critics, scratch their heads, and cunningly conclude (as a generation ago) that it is a "safety-valve", or (as nowadays) a case of "double consciousness" or any of the numerous other things it has been thought to be, and still less that the man is crazy in reality. Thus, and

by his subtler treatment and phrasing, he intensified an effect of contrast provided in the melodrama, similar to that later invented for Othello, and however improbable, too precious to be surrendered. And profiting by the familiarity of the rest of the intrigue—the baffling of the spies, the doubt of the ghost and theatrical performance to satisfy it, the sparing of the king at the devotions, the killing of him (as is intended) behind the arras and the reproachful conference with his mother, the trip to England—the dramatist (to judge by the changes from Quarto I to Quarto II and the 2 Folios) subdued instead of emphasizing, its irrelevance, but accentuated and complicated its dangers, letting Hamlet perilously play the king's game (but beat him at it) as if it were his own, and, unlike Kyd's Hamlet, keep the secret of his revengeful purpose from his friends, his mother, and even from Horatio until near the end of the tragedy, and his plan to the very end. Thus he heightened the suspense and mystery imparted to the hero, dignity, delicacy and pathos, and sthrew the whole burden of motivation or explanation, upon his elf-reproaches."

**Popularity of Hamlet**

In the Elizabethan age *Hamlet* was one of the most popular plays. The sharp outline of the play and the revenge-motive appealed to the Elizabethan audience, both high and low. Kyd's play on the subject had long held the stage. Shakespeare was evidently commissioned by his company to write out a new version to rival the success of Kyd's play. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* outlines Kyd's. Shakespeare's poetry, subtle insight and perception (partly dramatic and psychological) were the decisive factors of success.

In the eighteenth century, the age of artificial poetry, prose and reason, *Hamlet* seems to have lost its hold upon popular imagination. In the nineteenth century there was a revival of Shakespeare and a succession of celebrated actors appeared in the role of Hamlet. And since then it has continued to be popular. Critics beginning with Goethe and Coleridge might have done some damage by their subtle, abstract and over-philosophical interpretation of the play. Their criticism made some imaginary difficulties for the presentation of the play. Now with a better knowledge and understanding of the simpler technique and conditions of the Elizabethan stage these difficulties have been overcome, and the popularity of *Hamlet* on the stage remains unabated till to-day.

It is often suggested by critics that Shakespeare wrote down to the intelligence of the common audience. There is so much of murder and blood-shed in *Hamlet* and it certainly satisfied the appetite of the "groundlings" in the days of Shakespeare. But in *Hamlet* there is as much to interest an intellectual audience—Shakespeare's searching analysis of, and reflection on life, the very delving into the enigma that haunts the thoughtful mind in every age. Brandes writes, "Three hundred years after his creation, Hamlet is still the confidant and friend of sad and thoughtful souls in every hand. There is something unique in this. With such piercing vision has Shakespeare searched out the depths of his own, and at the same time of all human nature, and so boldly and surely has he depicted the outward semblance of what he saw, that centuries later, men of every country and of every race have felt their own being moulded like wax in his hand and have seen themselves in his poetry as in a mirror.

We can understand why *Hamlet* is still a popular play; it reveals most of the mind and temper of Shakespeare, at least on the graver side. Shakespeare made of Hamlet what he is. Saxo had given him only the name; Kyd produced a melodrama. It is true that Shakespeare reshaped the play with an eye to the stage but at the same time he put into it his reading of the life at its best and worst, not unavoidably with a smack of cynicism. If the play has suggested so many problems, speculative and otherwise, in which the general reader may not be interested, he cannot pass by the issue of life adumbrated in the play—and this explains the popularity of *Hamlet* with the reader and on the stage.

Stopford A. Brooke writes, "The simple lines...on which the characters of Hamlet, the King, Horatio, Ophelia and the Queen are drawn, and on which the plot is made, are within the comprehension of the most uneducated intellect and for this reason as well as for the striking simplicity of the *mise en scene*, we find that *Hamlet* is as great a favourite with a gallery as with the stalls, with the village audience in a barn as with an audience of academics; when it is acted by a strolling company, or by the leading actors of England, Germany or France. Every one understands the story, is interested in its action and characters, in the vivid and fatal movement of it. A child would comprehend the outlines of Hamlet's story. An alert boy or girl, on seeing the play, would probably ask the same questions we ask. Did Hamlet believe the ghost? Was he really in love with Ophelia?

Did he talk such nonsense and such sense together? If he thought the king had really murdered his father, why did he not kill the king, at once? Was he mad or only pretending? These and many other are simple questions which naturally arise And I am not sure whether the answers to them are not quite simple also. They would be if Shakespeare had not troubled our answers and confused our minds with his addition to the simple outlines of the most subtle and complete representation of the thoughts and feelings of the characters. The more we hear of the inner life, the less we are able to say clearly why they did this or that; the more subtle and the less simple seems the true answers to the questions."

**Local Colour and Atmosphere in Hamlet**

Shakespeare shows considerable knowledge of local custom and tradition, as he pictures Denmark in the play. He might have got some stray information from the travelling company of actors, who visited Denmark in 1580. Among these actors were William Kemp, George Bryan and Thomas Pope, the latter two joining Shakespeare's own company. But to evoke the true atmosphere Shakespeare depended not simply on the information available, but on his native artistic intuition, his delicate perception and sensibility.

Boas writes, "It is evident that in this rude tale of treachery and bloodshed Shakespeare found only the roughest materials for his drama, yet it was a happy accident that led him to choose his Scandinavian saga as his framework of his most representative play. For this the English Muse in her full-grown maturity turns her face again towards the region where she was cradled in infancy Hamlet, the Dane, claims kinship with Beowulf, and in the space of a thousand years that separates them, the surrounding features of nature have but little changed. The air that blows over the platform at Elsinore is as nipping and eager as when it bellied the sails of the Vikings' galleys, and the opposite cliff with dreadful summit still beetles o'er his base into the sea. Echoes of the primitive age reach us in such episodes as the 'angry parle,' in which Hamlet's father smote the sledded Polacks on the ice, and the sea-fight where-in Hamlet is taken prisoner."

It is this saga spirit of the story that Shakespeare renders so subtly in the play—the overhanging northern sky, the unrelieved gloom of the mind, the haunting sense of "painful riddles of life" are the background that make the drama so tremendous in im-

pression. The critics meet with so much contradiction in the play because they lose sight of this fact, and seek to interpret it according to their own bias or prepossession. The original saga carries into the story a wild delight in bloodshed, the joy of life "sicklied o'er,—with the pale cast of thought", "the dread of something after death", and when we keep it in view, we can understand the meditative proctivity of Hamlet.

The minor details in the play reinforce the impression that contemporary Danish life is painted in some detail. We may take the references to the intemperance of the Danes, to their national musical instrument, kettle-drum, and to the University of Wittenburg where Hamlet and Horatio were together ; we may note the specific Danish names—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Then again Shakespeare fixes the scene at the castle of Elsinore, which had been built in the time of Shakespeare. "The scene in which Polonius listens behind the arras and in which Hamlet, in reproaching the Queen points to the portraits of the late and present kings, has even been regarded as proving that Shakespeare knew something of the interior of the castle." It is a Danish custom that Shakespeare represents by trumpet-blasts and cannon firing which go with health-drinking. Verity notes that the Dumb show was a feature of the Danish stage. There is the "Danish march," announcing the entry of the King and Queen before the Play-scene. About it Brandes writes, "When James ascended the throne, *Hamlet* received, as it were, a new actuality, from the fact that his queen, Anne, was a Danish princess. At the splendid festival held on the occasion of the triumphal procession of King James, Queen Anne and Prince Henry Frederick, from the Tower through the city, 'the Danish March' was brilliantly performed, out of compliment to the Queen, by a band consisting of nine trumpeters and a kettledrum, stationed on a scaffolding at the side of St. Mildred's Church. How this march went we do not know ; but there can be little doubt that from that time it was played in the second scene of the third Act of *Hamlet*.

### Hamlet's character, as interpreted by different critics

(1) "The time is out of joint : cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right !"

In these words, I imagine, is the key to Hamlet's whole procedure, and to me it is clear that Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it. In this view I find the piece composed throughout. Here is an

oak-tree planted in a costly vase, which should have received into its bosom only lovely flowers ; the roots spread out, the vase is shivered to pieces.

A beautiful, pure, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which makes the hero, sinks beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off ; every duty is holy to man—this too hard. The impossible is required of him—not the impossible in itself, but the impossible to him. How he winds, turns, agonizes, advances, and recoils, ever reminded, ever reminding himself and at last almost loses his purpose from his thoughts, without ever again recovering his peace of mind.

It pleases, it flatters us greatly, to see a hero who acts himself, who loves and hates us as his heart prompts, undertaking and executing, thrusting aside all hindrances, and accomplishing a great purpose. Historians and poets would fain persuade us that so proud a lot may fall to man. In *Hamlet* we are taught otherwise ; the hero has no plan, but the piece is full of plan.........

Hamlet is endowed more properly with sentiment than with a character ; it is events alone that push him on ; and accordingly the piece has somewhat the amplification of a novel. But as it is Fate that draws the plan, as the piece proceeds from a deed of terror, and the hero is steadily driven on to a deed of terror, the work is tragic in the highest sense, and admits of no other than a tragic end. Goethe : *Wilhelm Meister.*

(2) In the healthy processes of mind, a balance is constantly maintained between the impressions from outward objects and the inward operations of the intellect : for, if there be an overbalance in the contemplative faculty, man thereby becomes the creature, of mere meditation; and loses his natural power of action. Now, one of Shakespeare's modes of creating characters is, to conceive any one intellectual or moral faculty in morbid excess, to place himself, Shakespeare, thus mutilated or diseased, under given circumstances. In Hamlet, he seems to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses and our meditation on the workings of our minds—an *equilibrium* between the real and imaginary worlds. In Hamlet this balance is disturbed ; his thoughts and the images of his fancy are more vivid than his actual perceptions, and his very perceptions, instantly passing through the medium of his contemplations acquire as they pass, a form and colour not naturally their own. Hence we see a great, an

almost enormous intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action, consequent upon it, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. This character Shakespeare places in circumstances under which it is obliged to act on the spur of the moment :—Hamlet is brave and careless of death ; but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve...

The effect of this overbalance of the imaginative power is beautifully illustrated in the everlasting broodings and superfluous activities of Hamlet's mind, which, unseated from its healthy relation, is constantly occupied with the world within : giving substance to shadows, and throwing a mist over all common-place actualities. It is the nature of thought to be indefinite—definiteness belongs to external imagery alone. Hence it is that the sense of sublimity arises not from the sight of an outward object, but from the beholder's reflection upon it ; not from the sensuous, but from the imaginative reflex. Few have seen a celebrated waterfall without feeling something akin to disappointment ; it is only subsequently that the image comes back full into the mind, and brings with it a train of grand or beautiful associations. Hamlet feels thus ; his senses are in a trance, and he looks upon external objects as hieroglyphics.—Coleridge : *Notes and Lectures upon Shakespeare.*

Goethe seems to make out Hamlet a sentimental weakling. Such a view of Hamlet is inconsistent with the saga spirit, as we have pointed out above. The story comes from the Danish saga. Whatever changes Shakespeare might have wrought in the story—for, as we have seen, in the externals the story is very much the same as the original—Shakespeare retained the saga spirit, as witnessed in the setting and atomosphere of the play. Another point is the adapting of it as a revenge-play, in which revenge is only postponed till the end, and it is no question of inaction. Judged by either of the standards Hamlet does not seem to carry a burden, too heavy for him, which he can neither bear nor throw off. Coleridge looks upon Hamlet as a waster. Dr. Kolbe writes, "I maintain that both the sanest among us and the most energetic of us identify ourselves with Hamlet quite as much as poor Coleridge did. Instinctively we do not hold his view. Coleridge flattered himself when he posed as a Hamlet. He had dulled his own moral sensibilities, had paralysed his whole active life, by the use of drugs. We pity, but we do not think of the tragedy of Coleridge. Hamlet's was

not a maimed nature. He had lived a clean life ; he had high ideals ; his conscientiousness was on the same high level as his understanding. Normally he was an active man."

Later critics such as Dowden and Bradley seem to have been influenced by the views of Goethe and Coleridge : they attempt to re-adjust these views. Dowden points out that Coleridge exaggerates one element of Hamlet's character. "Hamlet is not merely or chiefly intellectual ; the emotional side of his character is quite as important as the intellectual ; his malady is as deep-seated in his sensibilities, and in his heart as in his brain."

Bradley's view may be thus summed up : He does not accept Goethe's view of Hamlet as a sentimental weakling—a sort of Werther, and also Schlegel, nor Coleridge's view of the disproportionate predominance of intellectual activity in Hamlet, paralysing his power of will and capacity of action. He infers that Hamlet's days at Wittenburg (if they can be reconstructed from hints in the play) make him out to be a dreamer. He studied philosophy from which he developed a speculative interest in things of life. His mother's incestuous marriage partly unhinges his mind. He becomes a prey to melancholy, it may by described as *melancholia*. Bradley makes his melancholia responsible for his inaction.

We have pointed out above that the inaction of Hamlet seems to be an obsession with some critics. When we see Hamlet on the stage we do not perceive anything of his inaction. Let Hamlet be put back in the Elizabethan setting and studied in the Elizabethan context, there is little sign of inaction on his part. The delay, of which Hamlet sometimes complains, and which possesses the imagination of critics, can but reveal that Hamlet is getting impatient for revenge. If the revenge had been accomplished in the beginning, it would be no tragedy of intrigue and passion which *Hamlet* certainly is. The soliloquies of Hamlet are thrown in as a process of rationalization—and it is in this matter that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* shows a marked difference from Kyd's.

First, the ground is adequately prepared for the revenge. Hamlet must do away with the doubt in his mind. Secondly, he must dismiss any thought of love, which might distract his revenge. This explains his rejection for Ophelia. To get up the play of the *Murder of Gonzago* which seems to offer a solution, takes some time and immediately after the performance of the

play he interviews his mother. The killing of Polonius behind the arras accelerates the action. There can be no pause or vacillation now. The revenge would have taken place quickly, but Hamlet is shipped off to England. On the way he is captured by pirates, and returns to Denmark. Then come the grave-yard scene, the fencing match—and the revenge. We perceive little delay.

G. B. Harrison writes, "The question whether Hamlet was mad in a medical sense, so furiously debated forty years ago, has rather ceased to interest the present generation, but the further question why did he delay to kill his uncle has not yet been answered to the general satisfaction. The problem seems not to have caused much excitement for two-hundred years, but since the day of Goethe, critics and psychologists have invoked all the laws of complex and suppression to explain a phenomenon which was perfectly familiar to any Elizabethan play-goer. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*–it seems almost profane to say it–belongs to the common and popular type of drama known as the Revenge Play, where the dramatic motive is not whether the avenger will achieve his object, but how and when. The interest of a Revenge Play was in watching the hero summoning obstacle after obstacle until finally he reached his victim's heart; but while lesser dramatists laid physical obstacles in the way of revenge, Shakespeare puts intellectual.

It has been rather the fashion to picture Hamlet as a kind of neurotic undergraduate who suffers from sudden spasms of action. Yet none of the other persons in the play takes to this view... Nor do his deeds suggest a man who is too thoughtful to act. His obvious and insolent contempt for king, his impetuosity when he first sees the ghost, his slaying of Polonius, his speed in devising the trap for Claudius, his ruthlessness in disposing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and his grim amusement at the surpise that awaits them, his behaviour at the funeral of Ophelia, his ferocity when he kills Claudius, stabbing him first and then forcing the poisoned cup between his lips–these are not the traits of a man who has strayed away from the University. Hamlet, indeed, is the most headlong and fiery of all Shakespeare's heroes, in thought, in words in action; and yet he delays, and is for ever cursing himself for his delay."

**Bradley's Detailed Analysis of Hamlet's Character**

" 'Melancholy' I said, not dejection, nor yet insanity. That

Hamlet was not far from insanity is very probable. His adoption of the pretence of madness may well have been due in part to fear of the reality, to an instinct of self-preservation, a forefeeling that the pretence would enable him to give some utterance to the load that pressed on his heart and brain, and a fear that he would be unable altogether to repress such utterance. And if the pathologist calls his state melancholia, and even proceeds to determine its species, I see nothing to object to in that......If we like to use the word 'disease' loosely, Hamlet's condition may truly be called diseased. No exertion of will could have dispelled it. Even if he had been able at once to do the bidding of the Ghost he would doubtless have still remained for some time under the cloud. It would be absurdly unjust to call Hamlet a study of melancholy, but it contains such a study.

But this melancholy is something very different from insanity...Nor is the dramatic use of his melancholy again, open to the objections which would justly be made to the portrayal of an insanity which brought the hero to a tragic end. The man who suffers as Hamlet suffers—and thounsands go about their business suffering thus in greater or less degree—is considered irresponsible neither by other people nor by himself : he is only too keenly conscious of his responsibility. He is therefore, so far, quite capable of being a tragic agent, which an insane person, at any rate according to Shakespeare's practice, is not. And, finally, Hamlet's state is not one which a healthy mind is unable sufficiently to imagine.....

Let me try to show now, briefly, how much this melancholy accounts for.

It accounts for the main fact, Hamlet's inaction. For the *immediate* cause of that is simply that his habitual feeling is one of disgust at life and everything in its himself included—a disgust which varies in intensity, rising at times into a longing for death, sinking often into weary apathy, but is never dispelled for more than brief intervals. Such state of feeling is inevitably averse to *any* kind of decided action ; the body is inert, the mind indifferent or worse ; its response is, 'it does not matter,' it is not worth while,' 'it is no good'. And the action required of Hamlet is very exceptional, it is violent, dangerous, difficult to accomplish perfectly, on one side repulsive to a man of honour and sensitive feeling, on another side involved in a certain mystery (here come in thus, in their subordinate place, various causes of inaction assigned by various theories). These obstacles would not suf-

fice to prevent Hamlet from acting, if his state were normal; and against them there operate, even in his morbid state, health, and positive feelings, love of his father, loathing of his uncle, desire to do duty. But the retarding motives acquire an unnatural strength because they have an ally in something far stronger than themselves, the melancholic disgust and apathy; while the healthy motives, emerging with difficulty from the central mass of diseased feeling, rapidly sink back into it and 'loose the name of action'...this melancholy is perfectly consistent also with that incessant dissection of the task assigned of which the Schlegel-Coleridge theory makes so much. 'For those endless questions as we may imagine them', 'Was I deceived by the Ghost? How am I to do the deed? When? Where? What will be the consequence of attempting it—success, my death, utter misunderstanding, mere mischief to the State? Can it be right to do it, or noble to kill a defenceless man? What is the good of doing it in such a world as this?'—all this, and whatveer else passed in a sickening round through Hamlet's mind, was not the healthy and right deliberation of a man with such a task but otiose thinking hardly deserving the name of thought, an unconscious weaving of pretexts for inaction, aimless tossings on a sick bed, symptoms of melancholy which only increased it by deepening self-contempt. Again, (*a*) this state accounts for Hamlet's energy as well as for his lassitude, those quick decided actions of his being the outcome of a nature normally far from passive, now suddenly stimulated, and producing healthy impulses which work themselves out before they have time to subside. (*b*) It accounts for the evidently keen satisfaction which some of those actions give him. He arranges the play-scene with lively interest, and exults in its success not really because it brings him nearer to his goal, but partly because it has hurt his enemy and partly because it has demonstrated his own skill (III. ii. 286-304). He looks forward almost with glee to countermining the king's designs in sending him away (III. iv. 209), and looks back with obvious satisfaction, even with pride, to the address and vigour he displayed on the voyage (V. ii. 1-55). These were not *the* action which his morbid self-feeling had centred; he feels in them his old force, and escapes in them from his disgust. (*c*) It accounts for the pleasure with which he meets old acquaintances like his 'school-fellow' or the actors. The former observed (and we can observe) in him a 'kind of joy' at first, though it is followed by 'much forcing of his disposition', as he attempts to keep

this and his courtesy alive in spite of the misery which so soon returns upon him and the suspicion he is forced to feel. (*d*) It accounts no less for the painful features of his character as seen in the play, his almost savage irritability on the one hand, and on the other, his self-absorption, his callousness, his insensibility to the fates of those whom he despises and to the feelings even of those whom he loves. There are frequent symptoms of such melancholy, and (*e*) they sometimes alternate as they do in Hamlet, with bursts of transitory. almost hysterical and quite fruitless emotion. It is to these (of which a part of the soliloquy, 'O what a rogue', gives a good example) that Hamlet alludes when, to the Ghost, he speaks of himself as 'lapsed in *passion*' and it is doubtless partly his conscious weakness in regard to them that inspires his praise of Horatio as a man who is not 'passion's slave'

Finally, Hamlet's melancholy accounts for two things which seem to be explained by nothing else. The first of these is his apathy or 'lethargy'...........When Hamlet mentions, as one possible cause of his inaction, his 'thinking too precisely on the event,' he mentions another, 'bestial oblivion,'...........So in the soliloquy in II ii he accuses himself of being 'a dull and muddy-mettled rascal,' who 'peaks (mopes) like Jolu-a-dreams, unpregnant of his cause'......Surely what all this points to is not a condition of excessive but useless mental activity (indeed there is, in reality, curiosity little about that in the text), but rather one of dull, apathetic, brooding gloom, in which Hamlet, so far from analysing his duty is not thinking of it at all, but for the time literally *forgets* it... ..........

The second trait which is fully explained only by Hamlet's melancholy is his own inability to understand why he delays. This emerges in a marked degree when an occasion, like the player's emotion or the sight of Fortinbras's army stings Hamlet into shame at his inaction. '*Why*' he asks himself in genuine bewilderment "do I linger ? Can the cause be cowardice ? Can it be sloth ? Can it be thinking too precisely of the event ? And does *that* again mean cowardice ? What is it that makes me sit idle when I feel it is shameful to do so, and when I have *cause and will*, and *strength and means*, to act ?"

"I have dwelt thus at length on Hamlet's melancholy because from the psychological point of view, it is the centre of the tragedy and to omit from consideration or to undertake its intensity is to make Shakespeare's story unintelligible."

We have made the above extracts from Bradley (*Shakespearean Tragedy*). He has given us an elaborate analysis of Hamlet's character. His inaction, his delay, his cynicism, etc., all spring from his melancholy or *melancholia* as the medical term goes. So it turns out to be a pathological case. Bradley never mentions that *Hamlet* is an adaptation and remodelling of a Revenge Play, the recognition of this fact will make the motivation of the play clearer. Delay is the essence of the Revenge Play, and the revenge is necessarily postponed to the end. It makes *Hamlet* the play and Hamlet's character understandable to us. Bradley, as we see, rejects the theories of his predecessors, but supplement them by developing the phase of melancholy in Hamlet's character. It should be admitted that there is an element of truth in each theory. In any case Hamlet's character is a very complex one. This complexity cannot be summed up in a single formula such as a too delicate and shrinking sensibility (as Goethe ascribes to Hamlet), or too much intellectual abstraction as Coleridge sees in Hamlet), or deep seated melancholy (as Bradley discovers in Hamlet).

It is no good attempting a reconciliation of these views. We pick out what truth there is in each theory, but any single aspect of Hamlet's character (which has been made much of by each critic) will not explain the movement of the drama. First, we should not forget that *Hamlet* is of the type of the Revenge Play. Secondly, we should not concentrate on Hamlet's character, taking it as a thing in itself, and cutting it out of the play. 'The play's the thing'; and Hamlet's character will be understood, if we study it in relation to the play. Each tragic hero of Shakespeare is a complex character. For our own convenience, we adopt a formula in explaining each character but each such character presents an unfathomed depth, an unanalysable residuum. E. E. Stoll seems to be right in saying, "None of the motives which Hamlet considers–cowardice, melancholy, bestial, oblivion, or thinking too precisely on the event-fits his noble nature, as we already know it, and his failure to act ; but they fairly cancel one another. In the first soliloquy on the subject, "O what a rogue ' he scornfully rejects the imputation of cowardice, afterwards, in ironical self-laceration accepts it, but he resolves upon the play In the second, "How all occasions", he confesses that why he has delayed he "does not know", but he resolves on bloody deeds.

**Hamlet—the Melancholic**

Bradley's detailed analysis of Hamlet's character–the diagnosis

of melancholia has no doubt revealed an important element of truth. What Bradley omitted to consider has been pointed out above. L. L. Schucking writes, "That Hamlet is to be accepted as essentially a melancholic can no longer be in doubt, now that contemporary sources dealing with this type, so beloved of the Elizabethans, has been fully explored. Only those who approach the works of Shakespeare exclusively from a modern point of view, disregarding on principle the mental outlook of his time, and the effect he intended his characters to produce, can have any misconception on this point. They certainly cannot come to any satisfactory conclusions about Hamlet's character and the motives that prompt his actions must always remain obscure to them. If, however, the point of view of the Elizabethan world be taken into account, it appears that amongst educated people the 'melancholic' was a familiar figure. In their opinion such a mental condition could be traced to a number of causes, especially to overwhelming grief, and would betray itself in definite ways, some of which were physical. But as Shakespeare's particular gift as an artist was an ability to portray the whole man both in his mental and physical aspect, he does not fail to observe the dependence of the one upon the other. He particularly makes the king remark that Hamlet seems changed both outwardly and in himself, from what he was before :

> Something have you heard
> Of Hamlet's transformation ; so call it,
> Since nor the exterior nor the inward man
> Resembles that it was. (II. ii).

He proceeds to give details of the previous course of Hamlet's illness (II. ii 146-51) to which, with its weakening effect on his physique, allusion is often made ; and even goes so far as to refer in a much misunderstood passage, to his too great tendency to sweat (he's fat and scant of breath, meaning 'he's sweating and is out of breath'–V. ii. 298).

"Various books of a more or less popular kind, written for an age much interested in physiology, describe such mental states, in which the sufferer, distraught, and obsessed by tormenting and fantastic thoughts, easily irritated, a prey to fits of violence usually followed by depression, is continually liable to sudden changes of mood and laggard in action to the point of forgetting even his most pressing duties .....Such states of mind had been observed by dramatists long before Shakespeare and used with great effect on the public in the drawing of characters for their

plays, such as the old Marshal Hieronimo in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. But though Shakespeare here, as so often, took over the imperfect work of others - imperfect, that is, if compared with his own–*he used the type only as a basis on which to build up the most expressive and intimate character study that is to be found in any of his plays*, filled though they are with unforgettable figures."

The view, set forth here, cannot be rejected. Bradley has drawn our attention to Hamlet's melancholia. And here is a German critic who has gone into the matter, and points out that the melancholic figure was a pretty common Elizabethan study. This is no doubt true. In Ben Jonson's 'Humour' plays the trend is clearly manifested. "Humour he conceived to be something dependent upon the physical constitution of the individual, which provokes a habit, constitutes a ruling foible, and *diverts the action of the subject into courses which move mirth*." The serious type of the humour of melancholy Ben Jonson has not portrayed. We may think of Shakespeare's Jaques in *As You Like It*. He, as Moulter says, represents the morbid humour of melancholy," Jonson's Asper in *Every Man Out of His Humour* is a type allied to Jaques. He cries out in the same vein as Jaques :

> I'll strip the ragged follies of the time,
> Naked as at their birth.

Now melancholy more or less a pose with Jaques. Shakespeare might have intended him as a caricature. As Bradley or Shucking analyses melancholy, it may partly explain Hamlet's conduct. But we do not know if there can be any parallel between Hamlet and the melancholic type represented by Jaques. Dover Wilson, however, inclines to think that Hamlet is a further development of Jaques. He writes, "But on quite another score, this figure of Jaques, the melancholy, the contemplative – never getting to action beyond declamation and moralising – must give food for thought to any student of Shakespeare. He upon a fanciful comedy intrudes a figure, brooding on the ways of humankind draped (we all visualise Jaques to be so draped) in a careful cloak of black. As yet he forwards no action, stands outside, plays no part save that of observer, amused critic.. But this contemplative man in his 'inky cloak' *persists in Shakespeare's mind to be oppressed by dreadful responsibility, to be forced into action by most tragic pressure of fate*. It happens so : it persists to most tragic violence, but allowing for this circumstantial pressure, let us compare Jaques with Hamlet and his :

"What a piece of work is a man, etc."

In depth, subtlety and complexity Hamlet is far ahead of Jaques, and we may doubt whether there is a hint of Hamlet in Jaques. Shucking is right in saying that Hamlet is "the most expressive and intimate character study, that is to be found in any of his plays." And critics, beginning with Goethe downwards, cannot be blamed if each of them finds in Hamlet a depth of meaning and suggestion which none can discover in any other character of Shakespeare's. That Hamlet is a melancholic type cannot be an adequate explanation. It may be supplemented by the view of Lily B. Campbell, who studies *Hamlet* as a tragedy of grief. Miss Campbell writes, "Yet I believe that if *Hamlet* is read against a background of contemporary philosophy, it will come to life as a study in passion, *rather obviously* constructed to show the profound truth of its dominant idea :

> What to ourselves in passion we propose,
> The passion ending, doth the purpose lose,
> The violence of either grief or joy,
> Their own enactures with themselves destroy.
> Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament ;
> Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.

..................The fundamental problem that Shakespeare undertook to answer in *Hamlet*.........is the problem of the way men accept sorrow when it comes to them. And it is evident throughout the play that the grief of Fortinbras is being presented as a grief dominated by reason, while it is equally evident that the grief of Hamlet and Laertes is excessive grief leading to destruction.

Miss Campbell refers to Mary I. O'Sullivan's study of *Hamlet and Dr. Timothy Bright.* So she examines it : "And since Hamlet has of late so often been assumed to be of the melancholy humour, it is perhaps well to question this assumption somewhat at length. He is a young prince of Denmark, and that Shakespeare accepted the traditional characteristics of the northern peoples and of the Danes especially seems to be indicated in Hamlet's speech concerning the darkenness of his people. In the northern nations the cold and moist humours must prevail, either phlegm or blood. Further more Hamlet is of 'too, too solid flesh," and even after the time of his deep grief, the Queen still says of him, "He's fat, and scant of breath." He has been in attendance at the University of Wittenburg, but there is no indication that he

has been considered a pale and melancholy student ; rather he has been on good terms with the players, he has been friendly with his fellows. Of late, so he complains to Rosencrantz, he has lost all mirth, foregone all custom of exercise, failed to find delight in nature or in man. But these are changes noteworthy because they are changes. And similarly Ophelia's lament must be considered :

> O, what a noble mind is here o'earthrown !
> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword ;
> The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> The observ'd of all observers, quite, quite down !

Finally he himself says in his challenging cry to Laertes :

> For, though I am not splenitive and rash,
> Yet have I something in me dangerous,
> Which let thy wiseness fear.

And if he were melancholy. he must be splenitive. Unless I am greatly mistaken, Shakespeare never trifled with his audience in this fashion; instead, every character in a Shakespearean play is engaged in saying exactly what Shakespeare wanted the audience to know and in saying it over and over again. If a man is a villain he says so, and everyone else says so. It is quite safe to trust the characters to tell the truth about themselves. Our problem is to read the words as they spoke them and not as we would speak them to-day with different meaning. *But in the language of Shakespeare's day it seems certain that Hamlet was not a man of natural melancholy humour......*

"The picture of a man of sanguine humour seems to me to be applicable to Hamlet in all essential details...Furthermore, blood makes a man of too, too solid flesh, and *no melancholy man was ever fat*, as king James rightly argued.

"But at the beginning of the play Hamlet is changed from his natural humour through excessive grief. The king tells Rosencrantz :

> ......not the exterior nor the inward man
> Resembles that it was.

He is become melancholy, but his is the unnatural melancholy induced by passion, and his melancholy is inevitably the sanguine adust......

Miss Campbell finds in Hamlet "inconsolable grief" as distinguished from grief that seeks for consolation. "That Shakespeare recognized this same essential difference in the possible

effects of inconsolable grief is evident in such advice as Malcolm gives to Macduff in *Macbeth* :

......let grief
Convert to anger ; blunt not the heart, enrage it.

The possible effects of inconsolable grief are dullness and loss of memory, the sin of sloth, hasty anger and rashness—the sign of ire. "And that he embodied these possibilities in the three young men represented in this tragedy seems certain. Fortinbras is guided by reason : he is not the victim of his grief. Hamlet is inconsolable, and his grief is of the sort that renders him dull, that effaces memory, that makes him guilty of the sin of sloth. Laertes is neither to be consoled nor to be appeased. His grief converts to anger. He enrages heart."

Referring to Hamlet's first soliloquy Miss Campbell comments : "Hamlet does indeed feed his melancholy with his thoughts of his mother's frailty thus following the accepted formula of being brought to a loathing of the world, to a condition where he takes delight only in increasing his melancholy, and to a desire to kill himself to escape such a world."

In Hamlet, as Miss Campbell says, passion is not moderated by reason, nor does it yield to the consolations of philosophy. It is intemperate and excessive grief that dulls and blunts memory, darkens reason so that it fails to direct the will and finally makes him guilty of sloth. Yet he is capable of an anger that demands revenge. "His blood answered the ghost's first demand with a swift promise ; he could offend Ophelia, kill Polonius, escape on ship-board, insult Laertes, even kill the king in moments of unreasonable passion, but :

What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy.

Miss Campbell clinches her point. Because in our own day we are sentimental about grief and those that grieve, it is hard for us to get the Renaissance point of view in regard to grief, a point of view which was inherited from the Middle Ages as well as from the older classical philosophy. Shakespeare did not fail to see and to show the essential humanness of grief in its passionate refusal of the consolations of philosophy. Neither did he fail to show the destruction which followed Hamlet's slothfulness in executing what his reason had judged and commanded him to do. Nor did he fail to show the destruction that came from passionate and rash action when he acted from passion and not from reason".

The exposition of Miss Campbell carries the matter still further, but it does not say the whole thing about Hamlet. There is more in Hamlet that meets the eye. And critics, according to their insightand experience, read theirown meaning into Hamlet. These interpretations of Hamlet's character have often been made from a *subjective* approach. Enough material has been given, enough for an *objective* study of the play, *i. e.*, with reference to the technique and stage conditions and the literary convention of the day. Now for the other side of the shield "*Hamlet* has more facets than any other jewel in Shakespeare's crown."

**Hamlet—a Character of Universal Appeal**

Some critics have idealized and universalized the character of Hamlet. It is believed that Shakespeare has put the most searching experience of life in *Hamlet* and that it would not be wrong to identify Shakespeare with Hamlet. At least the profoundest utterances of Shakespeare are embodied in the play; they are certainly relative to Hamlet, but one may feel that they are Shakespeare's own too. We may briefly quote the views of these critics here.

G. B. Harrison says, "Shakespeare put more of himself in *Hamlet* than ever before. Of late years, as his comprehension deepened he was infusing even the most trivial story with his own experience and using the drama as a vessel for his most intimate thoughts. *Hamlet* was full of them, on sorrow, on drunkenness, on sleep and death and life, on true courage and nobility, on fate, on morality and faith and love, on the universe. In this final version it was written in settled dejection, and though he could still admit that man was the beauty of the world, it was an outward perception of no avail to lift the smothering weight from off his breast." We may feel inclined whether it will be the right thing to read Seakespeare's thoughts and sentiments into what is uttered by his chief character in a moment of emotional crisis. There has been a tendency to interpret Shakespeare's sonnets subjectively, and it has been likewise extended to one or two of his tragedies. In drama subjective interpretation should have no place. But the personal colouring of thought and sentiment is one thing—and it will not do to forget that there is Shakespeare with his rich, passionate and manifold experience of life, with his human-heartedness behind the striking and significant utterances of some of his characters when they are stirred to the depths of their being. The snbjective interpretation cannot be, therefore, altogether ruled out, and should be given its due weight.

Hamlet must have intimately appealed to the instincts and passions of Hazlitt. Hazlitt writes, "Hamlet is a name: his speeches and sayings are the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What then are they not real ? They are as real as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind. It is *we* who are Hamlet. The play has a prophetic truth, which is above that of history. Whoever has become the thoughful and melancholy through his own mishaps or those of others ; whoever has borne about with him the clouded brow of reflection and thought himself 'too much i' th' sun'; whoever has seen the golden lamp of day dimmed by envious mists rising in his breast, and could find in the world before him only a dull blank with nothing left remarkable in it ; whoever has known the pangs of despised love, the insolence of office, or the spurns which patient merit of unworthy takes ; he who has felt his mind sink within him, and sadness cling to his heart like a malady who has had his hopes blighted and his youth staggered by the apparitions of strange things ; who cannot be well at ease, while he sees evil hovering near him like a spectre, whose powers of action have been eaten up by thought, he to whom the universe seems infinite, and himself nothing ; whose bitterness of soul makes him careless of consequences, and who goes to a play as his best resource to show off, to a second remove, the evils of life by a mock representation of them—this is the true Hamlet." Hamlet's experience is the experience of an individual in exceptional circumstances of life, but to Halzitt's mind it acquires a universal character. According to Hazlitt's reading of life it will be true. The fact is that the more one's comprehension extends, the more one sees life mirrored in Hamlet—a character which Shakespeare has drawn in the plentitude of his imagination and incisive perception. We must say that relatively to himself Hazlitt is right in his interpretation of Hamlet's character. Each may see something of himself in Hamlet ; therein lies the universal appeal of Hamlet.

Morton Luce sees the image of life and humanity reflected in Hamlet. He states his reason thus : "the hero stands alone ; in the other tragedies other heroic figures occupy the stage; here the leading character is the drama; and that drama is the tragedy not of ambition, nor jealousy, nor ingratitude; it is the most inevitatable and most awful of all tragedies, *the tragedy of human life* ; we might almost say that Hamlet stands for Humanity, with its burden greater that it can bear ; we are not all Macbeths, nor Lears, nor Othellos; but we are all Hamlets, even as was Shakes-

peare." Elsewhere Morton Luce says, "As the dramatist worked at his character, he drew nearer to him and nearer, gave him more of his own eight-and-thirty years, a maturer mind, a deeper reflectiveness; he is sad most of all with Shakespeare's sadness, and lest he shall reflect the artist too closely Shakespeare drives him to and fro on the verge of madness."

There is one point to consider here: The moral issues of the play cannot be of paramount importance to-day. We have now more tolerant views. For example, Schucking notes, "Hamlet's horror at his mother's 'incest',............seems hardly credible to-day." Pertinent to this point, E. K. Chambers observes, "Modern civilization has indeed discarded the ethics of the *Vendetta*; the moral sentiment which holds revenge for a father's murder to be a binding duty upon the son no longer appears obvious and natural." The very leading idea of the play—revenge for a father's murder—can have little validity to-day. This fact would have damned the play. But despite this it continues to be popular, and its appeal to readers, differing in taste and temperament, is greater than in the Elizabethan age. Apart from the deeper meaning and suggestion which critics and readers have discovered in the character, Hamlet has a magnetic personality—"a man of great talents, almost a genius, whose rich imagination, extreme sensitiveness, imitative gifts, and aesthetic interests are those of an artist, but are combined with a great thirst for knowledge and a predilection for the establishment of genetal truths." Note again his tedency to introspection, intensified by melancholy into a positive craving for self-dissection—and here we have the protrait of an intellectual of to-day. Perhaps E. K. Chambers is right in saying: "A prolonged study of the character leaves one with the startling sense that out of the plenitude of his genius Shakespeare has here depicted *a type of humanity* which belongs essentially not to his age but to our own."

**Should Shakespeare be identified with Hamlet?**

H. A. Taine says that Hamlet is Shakespeare. Similarly Shakespeare has been identified with Prospero of *The Tempest*. We must allow for the idiosyncrasy of a critic and also for the pronounced tendency in some critics to subjective interpretation of drama. Hamlet is a complex but fascinating character. It is a character that has many facets that irresistibly attract readers and critics, and so there is such a variety of views, propounded about the character of Hamlet and the significance of the play itself.

Verity puts the case very sensibly : 'I think, too, that a strong reason why for many readers *Hamlet* (like *The Tempest*) means so much is the feeling that here we get near to Shakespeare himself ; that the tragedy contains a measure of self revelation. Some critics, of course, reject altogether the personal interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. His art, they insist, is purely impersonal, the utterances of his characters are to be regarded as purely "dramatic :" far from "unlocking his heart" to us in his dramas, he worked in a sphere of sheer fancy, reproducing neither his own nor the nation's life and experience. I confess that this theory of impersonality, of the creator's absolute self-detachment from what he creates, is beyond my comprehension ; nor can I sympathise with the view that even if Shakespeare did project himself into his plays, we have no means at all of determining when he did so. To me his plays are documents which tell us a good deal about Shakespeare—not indeed the details of his political or religious opinions, but the general complexion of his sympathies, his prevailing mood at different periods of his career, his outlook on life."

There is nothing to object to here ; Verity states his view very reasonably, the truth of which cannot be questioned. It is certainly interesting to catch the elusive personality of Shakespeare in his drama. A dramatist does not make his characters' mouth his personal views, but art is after *all* a self-expression. And we may reasonably look for a reflection impalpable and evasive of the writer's thought and sentiment in his work. We do not deny that Shakespeare's personal outlook on life—the way his mind works, and reacts to experience, even his view on the question of good and evil can be discerned in his plays. We may imagine too that the mood of disillusion and embitterment, so conspicuously reflected in *Hamlet*, may have something to do with Shakespeare's personal experience. But we must draw a line here. To identify Shakespeare with this or that character of his cannot be fair. The creator must be greater than the characters he has created. Shakespeare might have projected something of him into this or that character, but Shakespeare cannot be this or that character. Shakespeare transcends his characters.

Logan Pearsall Smith traces the affiliations of Hamlet in the plays of Shakespeare, and tells us that we may hear the voice of Shakespeare in Hamlet. Hamlet is indeed a fine character with his intellectual accomplishments and super-sensitiveness and habit of self-analysis and hatred of sham and fraud—one may be pardoned for imagining that Shakespeare has partly

portrayed himself in Hamlet. For that we need not maintain that Hamlet is Shakespeare. This is what L. P. Smith writes, "Contrary to the received opinion that Shakespeare did not reveal himself in his plays, Frank Harris maintains that he did so, not once, but again and again. After reading and re-reading them many times he become aware, he tells us, of a certain unity underlying all the diversity of Shakespeare's characters. 'And, at length,' he adds, 'out of the myriad voices in the plays, I began to hear more and more insistent the accents of one voice, and out of the crowd of faces began to distinguish more and more clearly the features of the writer.' The voice and this face were, to put it briefly Hamlet's face and voice ; in Hamlet, Shakespeare, he said, had protrayed his soul, the very essence of his nature ; and when he wrote Hamlet's speeches, it was his own heart he was writing down." Smith adds in a footnote : "The possible resemblance between Hamlet and Shakespeare himself had been more than once suggested before Harris but only in a cursory way ; Harris was the first to develop it fully in all its implications."

As Smith points out, there are other figures resembling Hamlet—they are dreamy, contemplative beings, given to irony and melancholy brooding. Romeo is the first of these ; as Hazlitt says, Romeo is Hamlet in love, but Romeo is less complex, and like Hamlet he lives in a world of his own imagination. Richard II is another Hamlet, a passive contemplative character, and no master of his fate. A more mature character of the Hamlet type is Jaques in *As You Like It*. Jaques possesses Hamlet's detachment, his wit, and his lightning-like intelligence, and is, like him, wrapped up in a humorous sadness of his own. Much of Hamlet we may discover in the exiled Duke of *As You Like It*, and still more in the 'old fantastical Duke of dark corners' in *Measure for Measure*, noted for his love of lonely contemplation and retired life. His great speech to Claudio in prison, 'Reason thus with life' (III. i.) sounds so callous, when addressed to one condemned to death, and smacks of Hamlet-like meditations on life and human destiny. Feste and Touchstone, and Shakespeare's other clowns seem to possess ironic detachment and wit, like Hamlet's touching melancholy with a sting of absurdity, turning life inside out and upside down with their devastating phrases. Hamlet could easily rival them as we find in his fooling of Osric. Prospero is a benign Hamlet. "Indeed the whole progress of Shakespeare's plays we notice how more and more men of action and resolution tend

to be replaced by dreaming and brooding heroes, who have failed in one way or another, and prefer to look on at life as ironic spectators."

**Hamlet's Mystery—Hamlet and Essex**

Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, was appointed governor-general of Ireland in 1599. Unable to suppress O'Neil's rebellion, he endeavoured to come to terms, and receiving an angry command from Elizabeth to do no such thing, returned without leave to plead with her in person. But the queen's patience was at an end and Essex was imprisoned for nearly a year, 1599–1600. On his release he failed to regain his position at court, and allowed himself to be drawn into a plot for a rising in London to seize the queen and dismiss her advisers. The plot was unmasked, Essex was arrested, tried—Francis Bacon appearing for the prosecution—and beheaded on February 25, 1601.

The question is how Shakespeare came to be involved in the plot of Essex. We shall refer to an entry in *A Last Elizabethan Journal* (G. B. Harrison).

7th February. 'Richard the Second' played.

Yesterday Sir Charles Percy, Sir Jocelyn Percy, the Lord Mounteagle and some others of my Lord of Essex's followers, came to some of the Lord Chamberlain's players and would have them play that play of the deposing and killing of King Richard II, promising to them 40s. more than their ordinary to play it. The players answered that the play of King Richard was so old and so long out of use that they should have little or no company at it. Nevertheless at their request, and in consideration of 40s., they played it this afternoon at Globe, when many of my Lord Essex's followers were present.

After the rising of Essex had failed, an official inquiry was held of the Lord Chamberlain's player—and they were in disgrace for some time, and there is a reference in the play to their being on a tour in the provinces, Shakespeare admired Essex, and must lamented his fall. Now Essex's shadow falls across Hamlet. Schucking writes, 'Hamlet seems to be the echo of happenings that have shaken the author's soul to its very depths."

It is Dover Wilson who develops the thesis. We need not go into its details. He says that the inner Essex is reflected in Hamlet, but Hamlet is not Essex. Hamlet "is Shakespeare's effort to understand him as a dramatist, not as a psychologist.

Shakespeare does not 'explain' Hamlet he leaves his critics to do that, he reveals him."

Dover Wilson imagines Hamlet to be cast in the mould of Essex. He analyses the character of Essex, and it runs parallel to that of Hamlet. 'The tragedy of Essex was a tragedy of character. Even right up to the last he might have saved the situation. Elizabath loved the man, and did all she could for him until matters became impossible. But for his extraordinary moodiness procastination, violent outbursts of temper, indecision of purpose, and general emotional instability, which seemed to grow upon him and at times to verge upon madness he might have triumphed over Tyrone, and perhaps have ascended the throne. Further more, as we have seen, he could be implacably cruel, and was in his earlier days a ruthless woman-hunter. Yet he possessed most attractive qualities. He was generous to a fault, the soul of loyalty to his friends, open and frank in manner, ever gracious and kindly to dependants, a man of wide cultural interests , a poet of some distinction, a brilliant conversationalist, capable of heartfelt and sincere piety, a devoted husband and though no general, a rashly brave soldier. He seemed a bundle of contradictions, to explain which baffled even the subtlest of his contemporaries."

"It was inevitable that such an enigmatic figure, so close to him, and while alive so portentious for the future of the whole state, should fascinate the greatest imagination of the age......

..."The more one studies the character of the ill starred Essex, the more remarkable Shakespeare's portraiture becomes. Everything is there : his courtesy, his kindness to inferiors, his intellectual virtues, his passione for drama, his interest in spiritualism, his open and free nature, his nobility of bearing, his piety, his bravery, his genius for friendship, his brilliant wit, his love of field-sports, of hawking and horsemanship ; and on the other side, his moods of profound melancholy, his touch of insanity, his dangerous impetuosity, his frequent talk of suicide, his coarseness, his brutality and callousness to women, his ruthlessness towards those he hated, his theatricality, and above all his complete inability to think out a continuous line of action. Essex in Ireland during 1599, frittering away a summer and an army ; when forced to act, debating whether to march on Elizabeth or Tyrone ; and lastly, having signed the ignominious truce, suddenly porting to England and dashing into the Queen's bedroom, behaves exactly as Hamlet would have acted unde the same conditions Hamlet, unable to accomplish his design, a

design long premeditated, necessary for him, for his mother's honour, for his father's honour, for the whole state of Denmark, and yet always ready to act upon impulse, to test his uncle with a play which will reveal his own hand, to kill an unknown man behind a curtain, to get clear of his guards and leave them to incur the death devised for him, to fall into the trap about the duel, simply acts as Essex would have acted had he lived at Elsinore. Even some of the incidents of the story are the same. For instance, in Horatio's final prayer.

> And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest,

which grates upon our religious sensibility, we have, I think, an echo of the twice repeated prayer of Essex on the scaffold that God should send his angels to convey his soul to the joys of Heaven.

"And Hamlet's mystery ? Hamlet's mystery is the mystery of Essex. Shakespeare does not solve it : he could not if he would. Why the "darling of England" should have cast away the greatest opportunities that ever fell to an Elizbethan, why

> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword ;
> The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> The observed of all observers,

should have come to the block, no one could tell..................

"The reader mnst not misunderstand me. There is of course much more, an infinite deal more in *Hamlet* than this, for *Hamlet* has more facts than any other jewel in Shakespeare's crown. All I claim is that for his contemporaries it served as a revelation of the troubled spirit of the most puzzling and the most canvassed character of the time And if this be so, then something else follows : Shakespeare loved Essex, loved him more than most and admired him, this side idolatry, as much as any. Thus he not only shared in the general horror and grief at the Earl's fall ; he felt it in a personal fashion. The rebellion and execution followed by the re-writing of *Hamlet* as an everlasting memorial to his friend, were—can we doubt it,—the most profound experiences he had ever passed through.

It is a new theory about *Hamlet*. There is no question about Essex's rising having something to do with the staging of *Richard II* by the Lord Chamberlain's company, of which Shakespeare was a member. Here Dover Wilson says that *Hamlet* was re-written by Shakespeare after the rebellion and execution of Essex. So Dover Wilson's theory has an air of plausibility. Schucking

also supports it. He notes that there is a change of theme in *Julius Caesar* from the theme of loyalty to the throne in *Henry V*. In *Julius Caesar* the democratic right, nay, the duty of the individual to aid the common wealth in removing those leaders of the State who go astray, is admitted in principle. "It may well be," Schucking writes, "that the change of mood underlying the change of theme was prompted by the Essex affair. Indeed, the distant thunder of the coming rebellion can almost be heard in this play (*i. e. Julius Caesar*). But two years later, when *Hamlet* was performed for the first time, Essex's head had fallen to the axe, and his supporters, who had cheered him when he was the most powerful man in the kingdom, were slandering and denying him. His truest friend, the proud Southampton, Shakespeare's patron and benefactor, had saved his own life—though not his freedom—only by making what were for him most humiliating petitions and now the massive walls of the Tower confined him, none knew for how long a time. The influence of these events on Shakespeare's inner life must have been considerable." The bitter spirit, disillusion, cynicism which run rampant in *Hamlet* may be partly explained by this cause.

## The Dominant Idea in Hamlet, as expounded by Dr. F. C. Kolbe

*Hamlet* is a very complex play and that is why such a variety of interpretations is current. Kolbe proceeds to search for a dominant idea that might well guide us to Shakespeare's own point of view. First, some critics take Hamlet's madness as a matter of fact. Secondly, the prevailing view is that in Hamlet the intellectual so overbalances the active side of him that he has become constitutionally unequal to the demands of life—that he fritters away his opportunities and is nothing better than a "waster". None of these views can be true.

Kolbe says, "Hamlet's was not a maimed nature. He had lived a clean life ; he had high ideals ; his consciousness was on the same high level as his understanding. *Normally he was an active man.* Ophelia rightly describes him :

> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
> The expectancy and rose of the fair state.
> The glass of fashion and the mould of form.
> The observed of all observers.

And Fortinbras was not flattering the dead when he pronounced his Epitaph.

> For he was likely, had he been put on,
> To have prov'd most royally."

Kolbe finds the tragedy to be this : "It is the story of a man of noble nature, harmonious in mind and will, with imperfections enough to make him familiarly human, enough to make the riddle of life interior as well as exterior—such a man brought face to face with an insoluble problem."

It has been argued that Fortinbras or Laertes in the place of Hamlet would have made an end of the king quickly. But as Kolbe points out, there is the question of honour involved. Kolbe says, "Hamlet would simply have put himself in the very position he was condemning ; he would have slain the lawful sovereign to gain the crown himself. And what about his mother ? I defy anybody to put forward a solution *which could satisfy the conscience of Hamlet.* That was the tragedy."

Kolbe picks out such words as *prove probe*, *probation*, *try*, *put to trial*, *assay*, *test*, *find out*, *inquiry*, *question*, *questionable*, etc. His thesis he establishes by looking out for "deliberate repetition throughout the play of at least one set of words or ideas in harmony with the plot. It is like the effect of a dominant note in a melody. In some of the plays there are two such sets of ideas, and one is seen to be the dominant and the other the tonic. My thesis is not fanciful : it is demonstrable by sheer induction."

Then he says that everybody in the play persistently analyses everything that turns up, and that the analysis is moral as well as mental. It is "a drama chock-full of analysis from beginning to end." He has a list of 170 analysis or critical discussions in the play. A few are mentioned : The reality of apparitions; the purpose of the visiting ghost; national portents; the reasons for war preparations ; we may say that the king examines the conditions of his hasty marriage, probes Laertes' reasons for going to France, criticizes Hamlet's exhibitions of sorrow, while Hamlet analyses the expression of grief, searches the whole state of things, questions the solution by suicide, expresses forebodings, probes Horatio's reasons for coming, frames searching questions on the Ghost's appearance. In the second Act we may note that the king sends two men to probe Hamlet's madness, Polonius gives a babbling series of philosophical investigations, and ends up with the cry, "I would find where truth is hid, tho' it were hid indeed within the centre." Then the king, "How may we *try* it further ?" and poor Ophelia is used as a decoy. Hamlet probes everything—"What a piece of work is man !"—'there is something more than natural in this, could philosophy find it out". The second scene of the third Act contains the climax

of the play, in which Hamlet proves to *himself and Horatio alone* the guilt of the king. The net result of the supreme analysis in the play-scene is that Hamlet now *knows* the king's guilt and has one good witness. Two obstacles to action now remain: (1) he has to be able to *prove* what he knows, and (2) he must learn how the Queen stands. Hamlet might have killed the king at prayer. Note the words, "that would be scanned." To kill the king at the moment would have been contrary to the spirit of a Christian. Secondly, he must first find out about his mother. He happens to kill Polonius (which only complicates matters). "The killing of Polonius," Kolbe writes, "was not a mad impulse: *it was the swift action of a hope that accident had given him chance by removing the moral obstacles.* In that stage of society to spy upon a man was an act of private war." What is the position at the end of Act III? Action has been made more impossible for Hamlet than before. The Ghost's tenderness towards the Queen might be the projection of Hamlet's own feeling, though he thinks it objective–it ties his hands more than ever. The death of Polonius causes him to be put under arrest and shipped off to England. He never gets a chance again till the end. There is a soliloquy at this point. Koble remarks, "The soliloquy is as entirely "academic" as the other one over the king at prayer. Whatever delay there may have previously been, had been on account of his mother, but since the interview with her he has had no opportunity." In the fourth Act we may note began many more analysis, but we should pass on to the fifth—and here we find the clowns parodying logic and providing necessary relief, the same purpose served by Hamlet's satirizing of Osric, and Hamlet moralizing on impulse and Providence. Then we come to the great final scene. The moment the Queen is poisoned, Hamlet acts—not by impulse, but by rational procedure: "Let the door be lock'd: Treachery! seek it out." The confession of Laertes established the king's guilt, which is now known to others. Kolbe writes, "His killing is not, as I read it, a gust of passion, but a reasoned blow of justice with the explanatory utterance of its four fold cause,—incest, murder, misrule and poison. Note above all the intense anxiety Hamlet shows to have his cause reported aright. The cry of "Treason" rings in his ears, and he makes an effort to answer it. It was *justice and honour that had tied his hands, not weakness.*

> You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
> That are but mutes or audience to this act,

Had I but time,—as this fell sergeant, death,
Is strict in his arrest,—O ! I could tell you—
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead :
Thou liv'st : report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied."

Kolbe's contention has been that Hamlet could not kill the king privately without bringing on himself the accusation of trying to procure the crown by assassination. It is easy to see that Hamlet is overscrupulous in some matters ; for example, at first he would not take the word of the Ghost for truth ; he would take no action against the king until he had been sure of his ground and brought his guilt home ; he would lay no violent hands upon his mother. Yet, he is very scrupulous in points of personal honour and justice. But he could be unscrupulous too, as in sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to death. Kolbe explains Hamlet's delay by his regard for honour and justice.

Kolbe thus concludes, "A slight summary may bring my analysis to a close. Hamlet is a man of unusually keen intellect and equally high conscientiousness and honour. But (*a*) he tends to scrutinise consequences too deeply, thinking too precisely on the events ; (*b*) he is somewhat inclined to melancholy brooding, but is on his guard against it,—"out of my weakness and my melancholy, as he is very potent with such spirits" ; and (*c*) he has been from childhood subject to swift and transient outbursts of temper. Under ordinary conditions, his "weaknesses are kept well under control, and he commands esteem and affection, which would never be given to a dreamer. But when he is faced with a problem bristling with both intellectual and moral difficulties beyond the reach of man, action becomes impossible to him until almost too late, and that is his tragedy."

**Hamlet's Madness**

Whether Hamlet's madness was real or feigned is a question that should have been laid at rest by Hamlet's own words, addressed to Horatio' :

Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself—
As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on,—
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumber'd thus, or this hand-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
As "Well, well we know," or "There be, an if they might,"

Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me ; this not to do,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you,
Swear

Here it should be remembered that the feigning of madness was a part of the convention of the Revenge Play ; and so it is in *Hamlet* too. The pose will certainly help Hamlet to carry out his purpose—the execution of revenge, without alerting his enemies. But Shakespeare utilizes it for ends other than that of a Revenge Play. We may well doubt whether Hamlet has been able to deceive his enemies by his pretended madness. The king has never been convinced. Even Polonius who sets Hamlet's madness current, confesses that there is a method in his madness. Resencrantz and Guildenstern who tackle with Hamlet, suspect that it is "crafty madness." The king ever nurses his suspicion of Hamlet's madness. Only the two women in the play believe in his madness—Ophelia and his mother. Some critics run away with the idea that Hamlet was actually mad or that if he feigned madness in the beginning he went mad actually later on—and they refer to Hamlet's hysterical outbursts in his interview with his mother and by the grave-side of Ophelia. Critics and readers who imagine Hamlet's madness real should have turned to the words that Hamlet spoke to his mother."

*Queen* : This is the very coinage of your brain :
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.
*Hamlet* : Ecstasy !
My pulse as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes a healthful music : 't is not madness
That I have utter'd ; bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word ; which madness
Would gambol from.

There can be no more convincing proof of Hamlet's sanity than his words to his mother. Then again he is ever sane in his talk to and behaviour with Horatio. He talks sense to the players. There can be no question then that his madness is feigned. If more procf is needed, there is the real madness of Ophelia to contrast with Hamlet's feigned madness. A man out of his senses could not have plotted the death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. One may think that the fit of madness comes upon Hamlet now and then. He, for example, might have given way to madness at the grave-side of Ophelia. The king cries out, "O, he is

mad, Laertes." Hamlet's speech too seems to confirm the impression. He shouts :

> 'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do ;
> Woo't weep ? woo't fight fight ? woot't past ? woo't tear thyself ?
> Woo't drink up eisel ? eat a crocodile ?
> I'll do't.

Yes, it looks like the speech of a mad man. But Hamlet has good reason to *act* the mad man with a vengeance. Just a minute ago he uttered, in all the sincerity of heart, the most passionate love for Ophelia :

> I loved Ophelia ; forty thousand brothers
> Could not, with all their quantity of love,
> Make up my sum.

His avowal of love may be a bit too extravagant and exaggerated. But there is the true ring of sincerity. His extravagant and insensate behaviour immediately preceding this speech, take in both the king and his mother—and they miss the genuineness of his utterance—they fail to notice that it is a sane man speaking. But Hamlet is at once on his guard ; for a moment he seems to have forgotten himself—and it reveals, as nothing else could have done, his deep and sincere love for Ophelia, and at once breaks forth into that wild raving speech, challenging Laertes. His mother's comment ought to be examined carefully.

> *Queen* : This is mere madness ;
> And thus awhile the fit will work on him ;
> Anon, as patient as the female dove
> When that her golden couplets are disclosed
> His silence will sit drooping.

*Mere madness* means sheer, absolute madness. His mother is likely to know Hamlet better than anybody else and she has known him from his childhood. Does it mean then that Hamlet has been subject to temporary fits of insanity all his life, now aggravated in the present situation ? One might reasonably think so. Kolbe writes obout the Queen's remark (quoted above)—"The Queen explains Hamlet's outburst of passion with a mother's memory of nursery days." So it means that Hamlet as a child, has been subject to fits of passion. It cannot be madness. When she says, 'This is mere madness," she can mean only that he is acting like a mad man now. If she believed, as Ophelia

cid, that Hamlet had gone mad, she must have been disabused of the belief after Hamlet's private interview with her.

Harley Granville-Barker writes, "When he is alone we have the truth of him, but *it is his madness which is on public exhibition.* And a very 'antic disposition' he will at times display–for he must, if he is to claim the mad man's privilege and security–till at last 'his pranks' become 'too broad to bear with.' Hamlet's madness is a defensive apparatus ; it is to shift all suspicion from him, it is to put his enemies off the scent.

Polonius who seemed to have been cock-sure of Hamlet's madness, later revives his opinion :

Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.

Lily B. Campbell writes, "And I take it that this is just what Shakespeare wanted the audience to understand."

Hudson's view of Hamlet's madness is also worth consideraton : "It is a matter of common observation, that extreme emotions naturally express themselves by their opposites ; as extreme sorrow, in laughter ; extreme joy, in tears ; utter despair, in a voice of mirth ; a wounded spirit, in gushes of humour. Hence Shakespeare heightens the effects of some of his awfullest scenes by making the persons indulge in flashes of merriment ; for what so appalling as to see a person laughing and playing from excess of anguish or terror ? Now, the expressions of mirth in such cases, are plainly neither the reality nor the affectation of mirth. People, when over-whelmed with distress, certainly are not in a condition either to *feel* merry or to *feign* mirth ; yet they do sometimes *express* it. The truth is, such extremes naturally and spontaneously express themselves by their opposites. In like manner, Hamlet's madness, it seems to us, is neither real nor affected, but a sort of natural and spontaneous fmitation of madness ; *the triumph of his reason over his passion naturally expressing itself in the tokens of insanity, just as the agonies of despair naturally vent themselves in flashes of mirth.*"

There is something novel about this view, but it is not incredible. Most of the critics assume that Hamlet's reason is dethroned, while passion is supreme in him, and passion takes the form of melancholy which comes near to insanity. Hudson takes the view that *reason* is in firm control in Hamlet, and expresses itself by its opposite—madness : it is but an ironical response to impressions outside.

**The Ghost in Hamlet**

The ghost is a part of the machinery of the Revenge Play, and as such the ghost is in Hamlet. The ghost is primarily connected with the motive of revenge ; and so there is the justification of such a convention. Now the deftness of Shakespeare in handling the supernatural is a thing that no body will question. The opening scene sets the tune of the whole play—a play shrouded in mystery and terror. The ghost does indeed visibly appear, but it is a shadowy figure, resembling in dress and armour the late king of Denmark–Hamlet's father. At once Shakespeare makes evident the intimate connection of the ghost with the action of the play. We observe the subtle skill of Shakespeare—and it is manifested in the psychological effect to which Shakespeare is ever attentive—in that the ghost is not made to speak, but strides away majestically. It leave a profound impression upon the night guards Horatio, till now sceptical, has to believe the evidence of his eyes, and concludes that "this bodes some eruption to our state." The ghost appears twice in the opening scene, but will vouchshafe no reply to Horatio's question. The speculation that the ghost invokes Horatio has some bearing upon the play, and generates the necessary tension of feeling. The news of the appearance of the ghost (ostensibly Hamlet's deceased father) is later on communicated to Hamlet.

Hamlet is lately returned from the University of Wittenberg, and his mind has been exercised over his mother's hasty marriage with his uncle. He has evidently been summoned from Wittenberg to accept the *fait accompli*—his mother's marriage with his uncle and the latter's accession to the throne. Hamlet keeps his own counsel, and pronounces nothing on the matter at present. Then he meets the ghost (scene iv) and it is his father's ghost. The ghost beckons Hamlet away to "a more removed ground"—and then speaks (scene v). What the ghost reveals, staggers Hamlet. It is a shock to his moral sensibility—and with a great effort he keeps his reason and mental faculties from breaking loose.

> My tables,—meet it is I set-it down,
> That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain.

To many Hamlet's action—taking out a memorandum book and writing the thing may seem trivial and irrelevant and may appear as a hint of his sanity departing. Hamlet does this to take off the edge of his moral shock and revulsion of feeling, or he would have gone crazy. Hamlet keeps himself in hand—and here is the test that Hamlet could not have lost his reason and sanity

for a moment—we admit that there might have been temporary and occasional bemusing of his intellect and perception. The action of the play is set going by the ghost; that is the point to be noted.

The relevant question is whether the Ghost is mere projection of the imagination or a reality. There can be little doubt of the reality and visibility of the ghost in the opening scene and later when he speaks to Hamlet. It is urged by some critics that Shakespeare's characters, Macbeth, Brutus and Hamlet, highly gifted with the imagination, are susceptible to the phenomenon of ghosts. Banquo's ghost at the royal banquet might be a hallucination of Macbeth, for neither the ghost addresses Macbeth, nor anybody else sees the ghost Similarly Caesar's ghost might have been conjured up by Brutus's imagination, but Caesar's ghost does speak to Brutus and cannot, therefore, be dismissed as a hallucination. In the bed-chamber of Gertrude the ghost addresses Hamlet, but remains unseen and unheard by his mother. Kolbe, for example, notes : "Another psychological point. Shakespeare takes pains to prove that the first apparition (*i. e.*, in the first Act) was *real*, and shows equally clearly that the second was *imaginary*. The first, to Hamlet, was initiative, the second, inhibitive." We accept the subtle distinction that is drawn, but we cannot agree with Kolbe that in one case the ghost was real and in another, unreal. We cannot explain away the words, addressed by the ghost to Hamlet.

*Ghost* : Do not forget ; this visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose
But, look, amazement on thy mother sets ;
O, step between her and her fighting soul ;
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works,
Speak to her, Hamlet.

Why does not Hamlet's mother see and hear the ghost ? Verity offers an explanation of it : "......the fact that the ghost, while visible to Hamlet at the interview with his mother, is invisible to the Queen, must be meant, surely, to have some moral significance. It seems to symbolise the affinity between father and son, and the absolute breach (on her side, at least) between husband and wife. And does it not suggest that it is her perfidy that seals her eyes ? that the coarsening of her nature has dulled her sense of things non-material, and sundered her far indeed from the spiritual world ? At any rate, Hamlet's power to see and to converse with the ghost is a measure of the

gulf between mother and son." The ghost was accepted as a reality by the Elizabethan audience. People in those days believed in the malignant power of the witches, in the walking of spirits abroad–and the burning of bags, suspected to be witches was not an uncommon practice. We cannot, in any case, hold the plea that the ghost in Shakespeare's play is a *subjective* phenomenon —a hallucination springing from perfervid imagination.

The point will be made still clearer by a discussion of popular belief in, or attitude towards ghost in those days. What Shakespeare personally thought on the matter, we do not know, but he seems to have conformed to current belief and tradition. Dover Wilson writes, "The ghost-scenes in *Hamlet*....cannot rightly be understood without some study of Elizabethan spiritualism which was a very different thing from modern spiritualism. Practically every one in that age, including probably Shakespeare himself, believed in ghosts. The traditional view was that spirits were permitted to return from purgatory and talk to the living. Note the first words of the ghost when he addresses Hamlet (scene v).

*Ghost* : I am thy farher's spirit ;
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away.

Lily B. Campbell says that is is a ghost from Purgatory (an intermediate stage between Hell and Heaven where the soul is purified from sins) according to all the tests possible. They believed also in evil spirits, and these evil spirits might lure an innocent man to a crime and self-destruction. The Devil might take the shape of the departed one, dear to the victim, in order to embroil his soul. When the ghost first appears to Hamlet, his natural impulse is to invoke the protection, of the angels :

Angels and ministers of grace defend us !
*Be thou a spirit of health* or *goblin damn'd*,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee.

Hamlet's mind is assailed with doubt and fear at the first of the ghost whose reality is not, and cannot be, questioned. The ghost tells him things that none could have known but Claudius who murdered his father. In spite of the disclosure of the hidden crime, which Hamlet may not be very much disinclined to dis-

believe, the doubt and fear that it might be an evil spirit, linger on in his mind. At the end of the second Act Hamlet, while reproaching himself for non-execution of his task, positively expresses his doubt and fear:

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be the devil; and the devil hath power
> To assume a pleasing shape, yes, and perhaps
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits,
> Abuses me to damn me.

Note too that when the ghost appears again remaining invisible and inaudible to Hamlet's mother, Hamlet cries out:

> Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,
> You heavenly guards!

If he did really and fully believe that it was his father's ghost, why this appeal to the protection of angels every time? The doubt must have lingered on—and Hamlet finally determines to use the players to probe the king's conscience.

From all this evidence it is but a step to declare, as John Middleton Murry does, that Hamlet could not believe in the ghost. Murry allows all the due importance to the ghost, but cannot imagine Hamlet to have any faith in the *bona fide* of the ghost. "But that the Ghost did shake his disposition, there is no doubt; that was the motive of the old play, and is the motive of the new one. The ghost does something to Hamlet, which it does not do to Horatio. Hamlet is exposed to the ghost in a way in which Horatio is not. He is caught in the toil, because the Ghost merely confirms the hideous suspicion of his own 'prophetic soul'......though he would slip from its grasp, he cannot; neither could any man in his position. The revelation of his mother's animality, his dreadful doubt concerning the manner of his father's death—these have already meant the shattering of a whole moral universe." There is little influence of the ghost in the fifth Act. As Murry says, Hamlet is now rid of the ghost, and becomes a new man—"a man who is no longer such that a Ghost (or that of which a Ghost is the emanation, or the symbol) can shake his disposition," Does Murry mean to say that with the incubus of the ghost gone from his heart Hamlet accomplishes the revenge quickly?

### Function of Soliloquy in Hamlet

Soliloquies in Shakespeare's tragedies either reveal the character of the speaker or point to a new phase or development of

action or sometimes both the ends are combined. They are essentially connected with the action of the play as it advances. But about, the soliloquies in Hamlet, Kolbe remarks that they "are not, as frequently in drama, a complete unveiling the character. They are rather searching glimpses into one or other side of himself. That is to say, he is not dramatically revealing himself to us; in accordance with the character of the plays, he is analysing himself to himself. This is a psychological consideration of great importance yet it is often missed." This may be generally true of the soliloquies of Hamlet. He is, as it were, "putting a case."

But Schucking says that the first soliloquy after the break up of the king's council is perhaps the most important for an understanding of Hamlet's character. At least it shows us what Hamlet was like before the ghost appeared and laid a heavy charge upon him He appears to be very deeply shaken by his mother's hasty marriage. We may quote Schucking: "He is a man of high moral ideals ; for if he had not a profound faith in mankind, combined with the strongest impulse towards what is good he could never have been so greatly disillusioned. Moreover his veneration for his father commands our sympathy...But other less pleasing qualities are apparent in him too. Hamlet is physically weak (cf. '...no more like my father than I to Hercules', I. ii. 153) and his emotional reaction at this moment is not solely due to a violent temperament. Others of an idealistic outlook similar to his might well, in seeking the cause of their disillusionment at the inquiry of their fellow-men, come to recognize the fact that such–themselves included—is all mankind. But not so Hamlet. In his protest there is surprising amount of denunciation. He not only looks at things crudely and relentlessly, but he constantly pronounces judgment on them (*cf.* 'Frailty, thy name is woman'). Although to a certain extent he is merely torturing himself, for instance, in regarding his own mother as a lascivious wanton... his invective against her is nevertheless unmerciful. It is clear that Hamlet, however deeply he may suffer, is not the kind to bear a great misfortune silently and with resignation : he kicks against the pricks and his opinions are affected by his irritation. His description of his uncle, for example, accords very little with the impression that the audience have received of the king.

"At the same time a characteristic side of Hamlet is revealed by his surprising volcanic outburst, which denotes the white heat within. It is true that in the council scene he had made no pretence of indifference, but has shown by his costume, his beha-

viour (*cf.* I. ii. 70 sqq.) and his laconic observations what a gulf he feels between himself and the others ; yet he remains reserved about what moves him most deeply. His feelings are evidently not too strong to prevent him from exercising a certain caution.

Schucking seems to be a little too hard upon Hamlet. In this soliloquy he condemns his mother ; perhaps a son of today might not have taken such an uncompromising attitude if it be thought so. The standard of moral judgment has changed or relaxed. But Schucking leaves out of account Hamlet's fine sensibility– and the nature of the shock—devasting in its effect–which his mother's hasty marriage gives him. Hamlet analysis the matter thoroughly, not dispassionately but with reference to himself. His cynicism is his uncontrolled reaction to his mother's frailty. To some critics this brooding on his mother's incestuous marriage looks like an obsession with Hamlet, but it seems to be the key-note to his character. The news of the appearance of the ghost comes pat on this soliloquy. The confirming of his suspicion by the ghost's revelation and the significant change ( antic disposition') in his behaviour should be kept in mind.

The second soliloquy at the end of the second Act reveals more of his developing character under the reaction to the task of revenge, laid upon him by the ghost and is more directly related to the action of the play than the first soliloquy. It is concerned with the play as a device to catch the conscience of the king. The Hecuba scene seems to have galvanized his conscience into action. There is unsparing self-reproach, but it is a visualization of the wrong done him. He is going to act now :

> I'll have these players
> Play something like the murder of my father
> Before mine uncle : I'll observe his looks ;
> I'll tend him to the quick : if he but blench,
> I know my course.

Then a doubt about the evil purpose of the ghost crosses his mind :

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be the devil ; and the devil hath power
> To assume a pleasing shape ; yea and perhaps
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits.
> Abuses me to damn me ; I'll have grounds
> More relative than this ; the play's the thing
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

The delay in the execution of his task has been so much complained of by critics. The point is that it would have been *physically* impossible for Hamlet to accomplish his revenge, following the revelation of the ghost. Supposing he had done so (if it had been possible at all) there would have been no tragedy of *Hamlet*. There is the Ophelia affair ; there is the counter move of the king (sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on Hamlet) there is the "lenten entertainment" of the players. They certainly contribute to the development of the action of the play —and they are a necessary part of it. Here is Hamlet taking advantage of the players to make sure of his ground before acting As Kolbe points out, Hamlet is a man of scrupulous discrimination and fastidious sensibility and must satisfy the demands of truth, honour and justice Whatever delay is there, it is occasioned by Hamlet's scrupulous considerations and no less by the intervening phases of action. Note that Hamlet is getting ready for action when the second Act is barely ended. Schucking's comment is very relevant : "Now we are once more at the heart of the affair, and scenes like that of the player's declamation, appearing at first glance to have little organic connection with the plot are at once charged with meaning, for through them Hamlet has again become himself. And what a self ! In the autobiography of John Bunyan there is a passage in which the author confesses that there had been a stage in his spiritual development when he felt a veritable loathing for himself. Such self disgust can only arise in a personality mercilessly honest, that will admit of no self-deception concerning derelictions of duty due to its own weakness ; one that relies for moral support on self-respect, and collapses like a lame man deprived of his crutch once this has been taken away. Such an unusual nature Hamlet reveals to us." We agree with Schucking that "this soliloquy is one of the greatest movements of the tragedy." Yes, Hamlet is "a personality mercilessly honest."

Then we come to the soliloquy—"To be, or not to be" in the first scene of Act III. Much has been written about this soliloquy—and we shall refer to it later. It has been pointed out that this soliloquy is out of place here. It should rightly be substituted for the first soliloquy ('O, that this too too solid flesh would melt) in the second scene of Act I. After the visitation of his father's ghost the reference to the undiscover'd country, from whose bourn no traveller returns, seems to be pointless—that is how it has been taken by some critics. But here we should note the fundamental difference between this soliloquy and the other two soliloquies.

It is more or less on objective analysis—a speculation about death, whether death is preferable to "the heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to." But there is reference to the task yet to be executed :

> Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
> And thus the native hue of resolution.
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pitch and moment
> With this regard their currents turn away,
> And lose the name of action.

There is a short soliloquy at the end of the second scene, Act III, and there is another at the end of the third scene. Hamlet is now on his way to his mother. "Tis now the very witching time of night." The night seems to stir his imagination with awe and mystery, and sense of evil augury. He will speak daggers to his mother, but use none. Then he comes upon his uncle at prayers. He might have killed the king now, but spares him—and that for valid reasons We quote Schucking again : "That the reasons given here by Hamlet not carrying out his revenge are perfectly sincere and genuine cannot be doubted. If the superstition of the Elizabethan times, which accorded an immense significance to conduct at the moment of death, be taken into account, there is no cause for seeing in his own explanation any subjective grounds on the score of which Hamlet is merely excusing to himself his inability to act."

There is one more soliloquy at the end of the fourth scene, Act IV. It occasioned by his seeing young Fortinbras on his journey to invade Poland. There is the repetition of his self-reproach but his position is clarified. He lists his reasons for revenge :

> Sith I have *cause* and *will* and *strength* and *means*.

To do't. He 'has excitements' of both his reason and his blood to the deed of vengeance. "A father killed, a mother stain'd" are the strongest motives that ever could have been. There is one sentence of Lily B. Campbell, which very clearly sums up the position ; "Hamlet was apparently chosen to execute the public vengeance delegated by God to his representatives, the rulers." The final scene of revenge (which involves Hamlet's own death) is a vindication of this position ; and Hamlet's speech ('you that look pale and tremble at the chance'), his appeal to Horatio 'to tell his story' and lastly, the tribute paid to Hamlet by Fortinbras should be recalled here.

The soliloquies are not isolated ; nor are they unconnected

with the progress and development of the action. They are linked together ; and if they have much to do with self analysis, they reveal also important phases of Hamlet's character. They fulfil more than their right function in the play.

**Hamlet—An Artistic Failure ?** —*T. S. Eliot*

T. S. Eliot considers the play an artistic failure. We should better give in his own words why he thinks so :

"We know that there was an older play by Thomas Kyd, that extraordinary dramatic (if not poetic) genius who was in all probability the author of two plays so dissimilar as the *Spanish Tragedy* and *Arden of Feversham*, and what this play was like we can guess from three clues : from the *Spanish Tragedy* itself, from the Tale of Belleforest upon which Kyd's *Hamlet* must have been based, and from a version acted in Germany in Shakespeare's life-time which bears strong evidence of having been adapted from the earlier, nor from the latter, play. From these three sources it is clear that in the earlier play the motive was a revenge motive simply ; that the action or delay is caused as in the *Spanish Tragedy* solely by the difficulty of assassinating a monarch surrounded by guards ; and that the 'madness' of Hamlet was feigned in order to escape suspicion, and successfully. In the final play of Shakespeare, on the other hand, there is a motive which is more important than that of revenge and which especially 'blunts' the latter ; the delay in revenge is unexplained on grounds of necessity or expediency and the effect of this 'madness' is not to lull but to arouse the king's suspicion. The alteration is not complete enough, however, to be convincing. Further more, there are verbal parallels so close to the *Spanish Tragedy* as to leave no doubt that in places Shakespeare was merely *revising* the text of Kyd. And finally there are unexplained senses—the Polonius-Laertes and the Polonius-Reynaldo scenes—for which there is little excuse ; these scenes are not in the verse style of Kyd, and not beyond doubt in the style of Shakespeare. These Mr. Robertson believes to be scenes in the original play of Kyd reworked by a third hand, perhaps Chapman, before Shakespeare touched the play. And he concludes with very strong show of reason, that the original play of Kyd was, like certain other revenge plays, in two parts of five Acts each. The upshot of Mr. Robertson's examination is we believe, irrefragable : that Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, so far as it is Shakespeare's is *a play dealing with the effect of a mother's guilt upon her son and that Shakespeare was unable to impose this moti e successfully upon the 'intractable' material of the old play.*"

Here Eliot compares Kyd's *Hamlet*, which is non-existent, with Shakespeare's. He explains that nothing but the revenge motiveo perated in Kyd's Hamlet, and that the delay was caused by practical difficulties. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* the revenge motive is subordinate to, and clashes with another motive—the motive of a mother's guilt. So the conclusion drawn by Eliot is that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* lacks artistic unity, while it is implied that Kyd's *Hamlet* possesses artistic unity. Eliot has not either read Kyd's *Hamlet*, and what it was is all guess-work. Then he points out that Shakespeare made use of the text of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (which verbal parallels account for), and some scenes were the work of Chapman. And Shakespeare could not wield together this divergent material !

Does any reader of *Hamlet* think that the guilt of a mother is the insistent motive of the play as Robertson does—a view to which Eliot subscribes ? The hasty marriage of his mother is no doubt a shock to Hamlet. In the first soliloquy is expressed his reaction to it. Hamlet is over-sensitive ; then again he seems to have idolised his father. Hence his mother's marriage outrages his feeling. But it could not have been so serious a matter, but for the revelation, later made by the ghost. The secret murder of Hamlet's father by Claudius gives a new complexion to his mother's marriage with the murderer. Some readers of to-day think that Hamlet makes a fuss over this marriage. Compare what Schucking says, "Still more striking is Hamlet's prejudice against his mother. It is true that the modern reader runs a risk of misinterpreting Gertrude's character, owing to the change that has taken place in the conception of morality. We cannot now regard the Queen's marriage with her brother-in-law as incestuous, and as the crime it appeared in those days. It must, therefore, not be forgotten that Hamlet's view was fundamentally different from ours. Further more the overhasty remarriage of a woman who has wept many tears for a most loving husband was bound to upset a son devoted to his father. But is Hamlet right in assuming that Queen Gertrude had fallen a prey to lust and had become a victim of her lowest instincts ? His attitude in this is evidently influenced by the melancholic's cynical view of women ; for what we know of the Queen's personality hardly corresponds with Hamlet's conviction."

It is a point of view which, it will be urged, could have no bearing upon Hamlet's action or conduct. Let us take the position as stated by Robertson and which is supported by Eliot. The play is 'dealing with the effect of a mother's guilt upon her

son.' The mother's guilt then enters into the motive of the play, if it be not the sole motive. The mother's guilt then should demand punishment. Is there any hint in the play anywhere that the mother's guilt has got to be dealt with? The ghost warns Hamlet against doing anything to the mother :

> But, however thou pursuest this act,
> *Taint not thy mind, not let thy soul contrive*
> *Against thy mother aught* ; leave her to heaven,
> And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
> To prick and sting her.

Hamlet strictly carries out his father's injunction in this matter. When going to see his mother, Hamlet says,

> I will speak daggers to her, but use none.

Note again the ghost's solicitude for the Queen when he appears again to Hamlet in her bed-chamber, remaining invisible to the Queen :

> But, look, amazement on thy mother sits ;
> O, step between her and her fighting soul ;
> Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works ;
> Speak to her Hamlet.

The ghost is likely to know Gertrude better than anybody else, and he wants her to be spared. Gertrude has no suspicion that Claudius has poisoned her husband to death. "Her outlook being limited she has no suspicion of what has been, or still is, happening around her." Let us note here what the ghost says of the Queen :

> Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
> With witchcraft of his wit, traitorous gifts,—
> O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
> So to seduce !—won to his shameful lust
> The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.

The ghost condemns not so much the weakness of the Queen as the lasciviousness of Claudius—and he demands the punishment of the murderer, and the seducer of the Queen, and not the punishment of the unfortunate Queen. This disposes of the question that the play deals with the effect of a mother's guilt upon her son.

The delay in execution of Hamlet's revenge upon his father's murderer, which is also harped upon by Eliot, as we have pointed out above, is *seeming*, and not *actual*. When we examine

Hamlet's soliloquies, we find that there is no delay. Eliot writes, "So far from being Shakespeare's masterpiece, *the play is most certainly an artistic failure.*" Eliot first mistakes the purpose or motive of the play. Secondly, he assumes considerable delay in the accomplishment of Hamlet's task. The practical difficulty which he notes in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, exists as much for Hamlet. Claudius suspects Hamlet's design, and is always on the alert, giving very little chance to Hamlet and finally packing him off to England. Then again Hamlet, too conscientious as he is, could not have secretly disposed of Claudius as the latter had done, Hamlet's father. We quote here again Miss Campbell's luminous remark : "Hamlet was apparently chosen to execute the public vengeance delegated by God to his representatives, the rulers." Hamlet's task is not simple as it appears to Eliot ; Eliot seems to have simplified matters, and since the play has little to do with a mother's gulit, he opines that it is an artistic failure.

The motive in *Hamlet* is a very entangled one. Dover Wilson goes into it, and states it as plainly as possible ; "............... Hamlet was thought of as the rightful heir to the throne who had been robbed of his inheritance by an uncle whom he himself describes as 'a cutpurse of the empire." Of course he had suffered a more overwhelming wrong in the degrading incestuous marriage of his mother ; but this second wrong quite overshadows the other in his thoughts (*note that Dover Wilson gives due importance to the effect of a mother's guilt upon her son, but does not take it as a primary motive*). But he is unmindful of the crown ; and far more important, Claudius is not unmindful either In short, Hamlet's ambitious designs, or rather what his uncle takes to be such, form a very significant element in the relations between the two men right through the play. During the first half Claudius is constantly trying to probe them ; they explain much in the conversation between Hamlet and the two spies, Rosenclantz and Guildenstern ; they clarify the whole puzzling situation after the play-scene ; and they add surprising force and meaning to one of the most dramatic moment in the Play-scene itself.

"I shall be told that had Shakespeare intended all this he would have made it plainer. The argument really cuts the other way. That Shakespeare did intend, it is proved by Hamlet's two references to his loss of the crown ; the one I have just referred to it at 3. 4. 99, and the words,

Popped in between th'election and my hopes,

spoken to Horatio in the last scene. And the fact that these

references occur so late in the play proves that Shakespeare did not need to make it plainer, that he knew his audience would assume the situation from the start." Eliot's criticism that *Hamlet* is an artistic failure, has been examined from different angles of view—and it is found to be baseless, and beside the point.

**Concerning "To be or not to be"**—*W. J. Lawrence.*

Hamlet's soliloquy—"To be or not to be"—is misplaced in the play, but it may express Shakespeare's own thoughts. We give some extracts from W. J. Lawrence.

"There are cogent reasons for believing that the most famous of all soliloquies, "To be, or not to be" does not at present occupy the position for which it was originally designed. Bradley had some suspicion to this effect purely because he found the speech occurring in a somewhat earlier scene in the spurious quarto. But he failed to see in this quarto what it really is, an ill-made version of the play, hatched up for a troupe of strollers, equally remarkable for its transportations and its absurdities, and so far devoid of authenticity that no analogies can be drawn from it......Is Hamlet, he asks, thinking of "The Murder of Gonzago", which is to be acted in a few hours, and on which everything depends ? And he answers :

Not at all, he is meditating on suicide ; and he finds that *what* stands in the way of it and counter-balances its infinite attraction, is not any thought of a sacred unaccomplished duty, but the doubt, quite irrelevant to the issue, whether it is not ignoble in the mind to end its misery, and still more whether death *would* end it. Hamlet, that is to say, is here, in effect, precisely where he was at the time of his first soliloquy ("O that this too too solid flesh would melt") two months ago, before ever he heard of this father's murder. His reflections have no reference to this particular moment ; they represent that habitual weariness of life with which his passing outbursts of emotion or energy are contrasted.

"The only difference is that in the "to be or not to be" soliloquy, there is no reference to the idea that suicide is forbidden by "the Everlasting"........

"What I marvel over is that Bradley's recognition of the fact that Hamlet had got "no forrader," that he is exactly in the third Act in the state of mind he was in the first, notwithstanding all that had happened in the interim, failed to confirm him in his suspicion (though it may have been an afterthought, being expressed in a footnote) that the great soliloquy had some-

how slipped its moorings. Moreover, it bears of itself clear evidence that it comes belatedly. To make Hamlet speak of "the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns" after he had communed with his father's spirit is sheer absurdity ...Since the reference predicates Hamlet's utter disbelief, not in apparitions or spirit-manifestations, but in the return to earth of the spirits of the departed, the speech containing it must have been written to be spoken before his awe-inspiring interview with his father's ghost on the battlements had taken place. Remark that when told by Horatio and the watch of the visitation of the ghost, the young prince says:

> If it *assume* my noble father's person,
> I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape
> And bid me hold my peace.

"Exactly what was at the back of his mind when he thus expressed himself is revealed by what he says in the soliloquy at the close of the second Act:

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be the devil, and the devil hath power
> To *assume* a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits
> Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds
> More relative than this.

"It is not until the abrupt termination of "The Murder of Gonzago" that he is fully assured he has been in actual communication, with his father's spirit. He is prepared then to take the ghost's word for a thousand pounds.

"My firm belief is that "To be or not to be" was written for delivery, and for a time was delivered, exactly where "O that this too too solid flesh would melt" is now to be found. Substitute the one for the other, and the reference to "the undiscovered country" is informed with rich dramatic irony, for hardly has it been made before Hamlet is given some assurance of the return of one he dearly loved from that unchartered land.......
....................Apart from the fact that the speech is informed, oppositely enough, with the scholar's melancholy, one may echo Bradley and say that Hamlet's reflections have no reference to the particular moment, nor, indeed, to any moment. Dramatically speaking, this is its weakness......Shakespeare has brushed his character aside and given voice to his own thoughts. There is autobiography here, if one could only

avail of the clue. As Dr. Johnson was the first to observe, Hamlet, though he complains of them, had no experience of

The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes...........

These are thoughts uttered in a vacuum. They are purely objective, dealing with the abstract. It is humanity at large voicing its grievances, not Hamlet. His fardels are otherwise. Dramatically speaking, it is a bad soliloquy that can be torn bodily from its context without injury to its cogency...yet what constitutes its defects from a dramaturgic standpoint has won for it immortality.

## Characters of the Play

**Hamlet** : We have covered the many-sideness of Hamlet's character above. That Shakespeare put something of himself into Hamlet is not an unreasonable proposition. All critics go beyond the dramatic interest of the character–and see something of humanity reflected in him. Hamlet has appealed, and still appeals to men of different temperaments. Whatever the speculation about Hamlet as a character, there is always some truth, relatively to the critic. After all each reader or critic, according to his own insight and perception, will find something of fascination and intriguing interest in Hamlet's character. We have given above and discussed the views of critics. Here we can but deal with some specific points.

(1) Hamlet is *pre-eminently an intellectual* – not a dreamer, though it is supposed that at the University of Wittenberg he has made a study of philosophy and metaphysics. It is true that he has a speculative turn of mind ; but he keeps his eyes and ears open, and rarely misses anything that goes around him. As soon as he returns to Denmark he senses all that is rotten there. Oversensitive as he is, his mother's hasty marriage outrages his feeling. The ghost's revelation seems to confirm the misgivings of his mind. When he learns how his father was poisoned to death by Claudius, and it was given out that a serpent stung him while sleeping in the garden, Hamlet cries out, 'O my prophetic soul !' Hamlet must have been suspecting some foul play. Now that he knows the truth, we expect that he should have proceeded to action at once. And here is the stumbling-block for critics. Here we have a quality (or should we say a defect of character ?), which is very pronounced in Hamlet.

(2) *Hamlet is over-conscientious* : Or as Schucking puts it, he is mercilessly honest. The ghost urges upon him revenge. We

doubt very much if it could have been immediately executed. If there is the appearance of delay—an impression which seems to be confirmed by Hamlet's self-reproaches in his soliloquies,—in view of his over-scrupulousness we must allow him sufficient time to make sure of his ground before proceeding to act. We may say that the ghost's revelation should have been enough. Here another element in his character should be noted—his scepticism. There is doubt in his mind whether the ghost is really his father's spirit.

(3) *Hamlet is sceptical about the ghost* : The ghost appears twice to Hamlet, and each time he invokes the protection of the angels of heaven. He definitely expresses his view on the point in his soliloquy at the end of the second Act.

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be the devil ; and the devil hath power
> To assume a pleasing shape ...........
> .......... I'll have grounds
> More relative than this : the play's the thing
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

The play-scene provides positive proof of the king's guilt. He confesses to a "craven scruple of thinking too precisely on the event," and in the same breath praises "godlike reason."

> Sure, he that made us with large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and godlike reason
> To fust in us unused.

There seems to be a contradiction in Hamlet here. He uses his "godlike reason" and judgment perhaps a little too much—and now he blames himself for delaying his task and duty. By nature and constitution he must fully exercise his reason and judgment on the matter of revenging his father's death before he is sure of his ground.

(4) *Hamlet is conscious of the "godlike reason" fully operative in him*, and seems to revolt against it. "Thinking too precisely on the event" is but a scrupulous use of reason—and it seems to hamper action. *Reason* should impel him atonce to the task of revenge and his too scrupulous use of reason is hampering action. He cannot move into action until he is fully satisfied of the guilt of Claudius, and he blames himself for letting the godlike reason "fust" in him "unused." There is an element of cursedness in his nature. His self-analysis for which he shows infinite capacity and inexhaustible patience is but the effect of reason and judgment

being too active in him. He may ascribe to himself "bestial oblivion," "craven scruple." The reverse is true of Hamlet. He is lavish of self-reproaches—why ? Because he thinks day and night of the revenge. What he needs is a little more of patience, and then he could have waited for the right moment. He meets the king but twice in the play, that means he has little chance of executing revenge until the end. He spares Claudius at prayer. It is his reason and judgment that deter him now. Truth and justice, the claim of which he is too rational and scrupulous to lay aside, demand that he probe the guilt of Claudius. He cannot do without a prolonged use of reason and judgment, and he declaims against the dilatoriness of revenge.

(5) *Hamlet's Cynicism :* His first soliloquy expresses both a loathing of life and particularly a cynical outlook ; God, O God, O

> How weary, stale flat and unprofitable,
> Seem to me all the uses of this world !

Is it occasioned by his mother's frailty ? She followed his father's body "Like Niobe all tears", and yet within a month married his uncle—and his father was 'so excellent a king"—a Hyperion to a satyr which his uncle was. He deplores the choice and taste of his mother. Hamlet was so devoted to his father—and his mother's crime in marrying his uncle is one he cannot get over, but it cannot certainly be all the explanation of cynicism. He is an intellectual with hyper-sensitiveness and excitability, and acute powers of observation. His cynical view of life may be dated from his life in the University of Wittenberg, and seems to have been reinforced by the vice and corruption he meets everywhere in Denmark.

> The time is out of joint, O cursed spite
> That ever I was born to set it right.

The evil times, and not merely his mother's laxity, are responsible for his cynicism. He might have easily passed by the evil and corruption that met him every where, but he thought that he must set things right. So we discover a strain of idealism in him.

(6) *Hamlet's Idealism* : The strain of idealism makes Hamlet so unhappy over his mother's marriage, over the state of things in Denmark—and in his relations with Ophelia. He loved Ophelia sincerely and passionately and there can be no question about that:

> I loved Ophelia : forty thousand brothers
> Could not with all their quality of love,
> Make up my sum.

Ophelia disappoints him as much as his mother." Frailty, thy name is woman." It covers both his mother and Ophelia. His idolatory of his father is proper to an idealist. He is disappointed in his mother and Ophelia because like an idealist he expects too much of them. Ophelia is used as a tool by the king and Polonius, and Hamlet can see through the whole thing. And there is partial justification when Hamlet cries out,

'Get them to a nunnery : Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners ? I am myself indifferent honest ; but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me......Why should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven ? We are are all arrant knaves, all ; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery."

It is cynicism let loose, but his cynicism is the reaction of his idealism.

(7) O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown,
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
The expectancy and rose of the fair state
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down !

Ophelia used to think of Hamlet in these terms. Here emerges another picture of Hamlet and it is as true as the disillusioned, cynical, melancholy, distracted Hamlet we meet in the play. Hamlet that was, is pictured in the words of Ophelia ; it was in the days when Hamlet had nothing of the revolting experiences of life such as he encounters on his return to Denmark from the University of Wittenberg—the evil and corruption of the society in Denmark—his mother tainted, his father murdered. S. E. Goggin thus reconstructs the Hamlet that was : 'Hamlet had been educated at the University of Wittenberg, and about the time of the play he had attained the age of thirty. He had resided for some time at his father's court at. Elsinore. There he had become extremely popular with the common people (IV. vii. 18) and was regarded as the hope and pride of the State (III. i. 152. He had acquired a reputation as a scholar, a soldier, and a gentleman and was the admiration and model of the fashionable youth of the day (III. i. 150 154). He was of an open and unsuspecting nature "most generous and free from all contriving" (IV. vii. 135).

**Ophelia**: Hamlet made love to Ophelia in honourable fashion, but he seems to have made a wrong choice. Ophelia could not, in any case, be a fit companion for him in his life. Thrown into

the storm-tossed life of Hamlet, she perishes, and we mourn her tragic fate. She could have no will of her own. She is of a passive, non-resisting character and submits to hectoring by her brother and father. She might have responded to Hamlet's love, but it may be doubted whether her love is stable. She is warned off by her father and brother from Hamlet, and the keeps away from him. Her love is at the dictation of her father. When Polonius imagines that Hamlet's madness is due to disappointed love—and it is Polonius's own doing, as we know, he wants to make amends by "loosing" the daughter to him again. Ophelia is used as a decoy by the king and Polonius. Hamlet sees through the whole game. He has got reason to be disgusted with Ophelia, but he appears to have still a feeling of pity and tenderness for Ophelia. Ophelia who loves Hamlet, but is not certainly one to break her heart over it, should have been conscious of the dishonourable part she was playing. A prayer book is put into her hand by her father, and she is told :

Read on this book,
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your lonelines. We are oft to blame in this,—
'Tis too much proved,—that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

Polonius confesses that it is a dirty game. The king's *aside* which follows Polonius' speech is a self-condemnation. Ophelia is a willing partly to it. Hamlet is not blind to what is going on, and to his sense of honour it is revolting. Ophelia might be an innocent victim. When Hamlet notices Ophelia, kneeling at the prayer-desk, he addresses her :

The fair Ophelia ! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

It does not sound like mockery. He feels for Ophelia ; after all Ophelia is to be pitied. When later she asks her where her father is, she replies "at home." It is a palpable lie, for Hamlet knows that Polonius is lurking behind the curtain. Hamlet repeats again and again—"Go to a nunnery." There is no use for her in the world. It is a painful situation for Ophelia, and Hamlet violently reacts to it as he cannot help doing. Morton Luce writes, "......she plays the spy upon her lover ; he knows it, and with loving pity pronounces her doom." We may note Ophelia's reaction at the end of the scene :

O, woe is me
To have seen what I have seen, see what I *see*.

If she puts all the anguish of her heart into this remark, does she hint at her personal loss—at her being broken-hearted, or is there not a tone of impersonality, expressing the regret at Hamlet's insanity? In her lament there is shown her admiration of Hamlet as he was—an accomplished courtier, a brave soldier, a distinguished scholar. But is there a hint of her love? All that she says about herself:

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his vows.

We may assume a period of wooing. Ophelia now regrets that she so readily allowed herself to be swayed by his honeyed vows. If she loved Hamlet, she has now changed her mind.

Ophelia is innocence itself. Shall we say that she is "too good for the world"? Morton Luce writes of her, "a maiden innocent as innocence, childlike as childhood, yet a very woman of very woman, whom a queen would gladly take to her as a daughter, whose bride bed a queen would have decked with flowers; who was importuned with the love of Hamlet in honourable fashion, besmirched with no soil, no cautel; who returned his love with such maiden modesty that the selfish warning of her brother, the coarse injunctions, the impertinent inquiries of her father, the fantastic insinuations of her half-frenzied lover, could not convict her of one evil thought; she in whose grave that brother and that lover contended for loving martyrdom; she from whose fair and unpolluted flesh may violets spring." It is an excellent tribute to Ophelia. If we may not blame her for anything, we must say that she acts rather indiscreetly when she allows herself to be used as a tool by the king and Polonius. She may not, we admit, answer Hamlet's exacting standard of honour and may be unaware of the dishonourableness of her part in playing the spy upon Hamlet. It may be partly explained by the vile court atmosphere as well as her home atmosphere which must have tainted her.

We question whether Ophelia could have acted like this if she had really loved Hamlet. H. Granville-Barker writes, 'We call her docility a fault, when, as she is bid, she shuts herself away from Hamlet; but not trust to her brother's care for her and her father's wisdom? How even question the part she is made to play later when not her father only but the King and Queen themselves prepare her for it? Ophelia seems to have no individuality of her own, and the meddling of her father, her brother, the King and even the Queen in her private affairs brings

on her suffering and tragic fate. Morton Luce says, "I doubt whether any character in Shakespeare is more completely a victim to the requirements of tragedy.

**Gertrude**: Gertrude is again a woman without character and individuality. She might seem to be partly responsible for the course of events in the play. Her overhasty marriage in a month or so after her husband's death–and the summoning of Hamlet back to Denmark from the University of Wittenberg (and that was the doing of Claudius) set the action moving. The antagonism between the King and the Hamlet is manifest in the Council-scene as well as Gertrude's feeble effort at reconciliation. In Hamlet's soliloquy that follows it the stage is set for action.

His mother's conduct has upset his faith in womankind—and nothing can restore it. After all that show of affection—

She would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on

that she should marry Claudius, a satyr compared to his father, Hyperion passes all belief ! And she followed his poor father's body, like Niobe, all tears ! His own line of thinking later receives confirmation from the ghost.

Ay, that incestuous that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce !

We should note here that the ghost condemns Claudius and not his Queen. Some critics have inferred that Gertrude entered into adulterous relations with Claudius while her husband was living. H. Granville-Barker writes, "........ *we* know that this shallow, amiable, lymphatic creature was an adultress, cunning enough to deceive her husband." Hamlet says that

She would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown,
By what it fed on...........

It was the obvious way of deceiving him. She wept bitterly when he died. We need not, however, see hypocrisy there. She may well have wept the more bitterly because she had been false to him. And husbands, whose love is of too complacent and Hyperion-like a 'dignity,' are temptingly easy to deceive. Within a month she has married her lover, and she is still the Queen. She owns that—in the eyes of the world—it was over-hasty of them.

But of any remorse for the past there is no hint at all. Surely everything if her morose son would but come to his senses and take a cheerfuller view of life—has at last turned out very well. This is to take a very uncompromising attitude towards Gertrude.

To infer Gertrude's adultery from the ghost's words, quoted above, is unwarranted. Claudius seduced Gertrude and it happened after her husband's death. Let us note the words of the ghost again :

> So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
> Will state itself in a celestial bed,
> And pray on garbage.

If we are to believe the ghost, his Queen is a lustful woman. Hamlet's words, quoted above, lend support to this view. Neither Hamlet nor the ghost accuses her of adultery. Then again the ghost warns Hamlet not to do anything to her :

> Leave her to heaven,
> And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
> To prick and sting her.

The ghost seems to have a weakness for her, and so her son too. We cannot presume that she is a bad, depraved woman.

After Hamlet kills Polonius, Gertrude cries out,

> O, what a rash and bloody deed is this.

To it Hamlet replies,

> A bloody deed, almost as bad, good mother,
> As kill a king, and marry with his brother,

From these words of Hamlet some critics conclude that the Queen had also a hand in the murder of Hamlet's father. There is no hint of it in the ghost's words. Nor does Hamlet press the point further. Kolbe writes, "The Queen's faint echo of the awful accusation (it was the first she heard of it) convinces Hamlet that she is not guilty of the major crime."

We cannot say that Hamlet is able to open her eyes to the truth about her husband. "For the Queen" writes Schucking, "in spite of all Hamlet's references to his uncle as a murderer, really does not seem to suspect the truth untill the very end of the play, for she never shows, in word or in deed, and especially in her relations with her husband, that she has drawn any such conclusion from what she has heard." The mother seems to have been drawn nearer to her son from now on, and, we may believe, breaks of sexual relations with her husband. She has always had affection for Hamlet. After Hamlet's violent out burst at the grave-side of Ophelia, his mother shields him :

This is mere madness,
And thus awhile the fit will work on him ;
Anon, as patient as the female dove
When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
His silence will sit drooping.

The Queen dies by drinking the poisoned cup intended for Hamlet. And then the whole truth comes out. Laertes is fatally wounded, and before dying confesses the plot of the King against the life of Hamlet. 'Laertes' last words ; the back-rushing memory of much not understood till now, of the mimic murder in the garden, Hamlet's mysterious '......as kill a king' the sight of Claudius here in his grip—she dies companioned by the meaning of all this, conscious even, it may be, of her dying son's implacable farewell."

**Claudius**–Claudius is the villain of the piece. He murders Hamlet's father, seduces his mother, and accends the throne to the exclusion of Hamlet. By his smooth tongue and smooth manner and shrewed manoeuvring he carries on allright, and there would have been no trouble but for the ghost's revelation to Hamlet. He is a very subtle knave "with witchcraft of wit." It is from what the ghost tells Hamlet that we learn the kind of man Claudius is. Hamlet speaks contemptuously of him—his father is Hyperion and Claudius is a satyr. But we find him behaving with dignity and statesmanlike wisdom when he presides at the Council ; first he dispatches the Fortinbras affair, then he turns to Laertes who begs leave of the King to return to France, and he graciously grants him permission. He has a little trouble with Hamlet. It is the Queen who pleads with Hamlet. The King talks platitudes, seeking to wean Hamlet away from his grief for his deceased father. But as it appears, his wish is to keep Hamlet under his eye, and not to let him go back to the University of Wittenberg. Hamlet yields to his mother's prayer added to the King's desire that he should stay on in Denmark. Claudius is shrewd enough to sense the recall citrant mood in Hamlet, and to forestall future troubles, he keeps Hamlet at his court.

The clash between Hamlet and Claudius soon begins, but it does not come into open. Hamlet does not, and cannot take any active steps against Claudius immediately. His feigned madness is but a defensive. But Claudius is immediately active, he sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on Hamlet ; with the advice of Polonius he employs Ophelia as a decoy. Claudius is shrewd, while Polonius is fatuous. And between the two they

make matters more complicated. Claudius suspects Hamlet's madness, and is ever on his guard. Hamlet's counter-move, that is the play-scene proves quite effective. Now there is in Hamlet's mind no doubt about the guilt of Claudius. Claudius who is tested in the play-scene, keeps his nerve all right, and now comes further probing of Hamlet, for he is summoned by his mother to explain his conduct—and it is done by the King's direction. The killing of Polonius behind the arras by Hamlet during his interview with his mother determines Claudius to pack off Hamlet to England.

Here incidentally we may note how it is with the inner state of Claudius. He keeps a placid exterior and extraordinary self-possession. When he is at prayer as Hamlet passes by and spares him, we have a glimpse into his inner being It is not all well there. After all he is not yet a seasoned villain, though possessing all the art and accomplishment of a villain.

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
A brother's murder.

But he cannot pray to be forgiven his foul murder, for he is still possessed of those effects for which he did the murder—his crown, his ambition, and his queen. And so it comes to nothing. Henceforth he gets more and more seasoned in his villainy. His is a career of villainy—and it is an art with him while he keeps a respectable exterior.

He has troubles with Laertes on Polonius's death. But his tactful cleverness soon wins over Laertes. Granville-Barker writes, "We can see his mind at work ; and with what agility when, his security shattered by the sudden tidings of the failure of his plot against Hamlet, the awakened devil in him turns on the instant to make Laertes his accomplice in another." The fencing match is the plot in which Hamlet is to meet his fate. But it drags down Laertes and Claudius along with him. Claudius's villainy at last recoils on him.

**Polonius :** Polonius is a blundering, blithering fool, though he knows himself to be a very wise and astute politician. He has nothing to do with any scruple of conscience or nice sense of honour. He can stoop to anything to accomplish his ends. The first thing he does is to diagnose the mental affliction of Hamlet He is convinced that it is nothing but the madness of love and he proceeds to trace its course to the King. After a long and tedious discourse that can only distract the hearers, he finally sums up :

And he, refused,—a short tale to make,—
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, then into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and by this declension
Into the madness wherein now he raves,
And all we mourn for.

Here we see the man that he is—*a wise acre, but a tedious fool.*

Polonius is apt for vile and crooked means. He sends Reynaldo to spy on his son in Paris. This is the direction he gives :

Look you, sir,
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris :
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,
What company, at what expense ; and finding,
By this encompassment and draft of question,
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it.

He is always voluble in speech, and Reynaldo finds it difficult to catch his drift. The point is that he is a man of limited intelligence and outlook and lax principles.

Polonius loads Laertes with precepts when he leaves for Paris. These precepts are the epitome of worldly wisdom. In its practical application worldly wisdom necessarily descends to low and mean tricks. After he takes leave of Laertes he turns to Ophelia. According to his narrow and material outlook he will naturally push at "many tenders of affection" that Hamlet has made to her, as Ophelia frankly confesses. And he warn his daughter against Hamlet :

Do not believe his vows : for they are brokers,
Not of the dye which the investments show,
But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds,
The better to beguile.

These words betray a course and filthy mind. And then later to test Hamlet he makes use of his daughter as a decoy. It is a very mean thing to do. "To cure this madness one must first know its cause, and he suspects nothing sinister in that. He does not stop to consider that it may be somewhat ignoble, a little cruel, to put his daughter to such a use. It is as like him that, having baited the trap with her and placed a prayer-book in her hands, the sight of her, docile in guile, should prompt the incongruous platitude :

We are apt to blame in this—
'Tis too much proved !—that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

and as like him that, when he and Claudius emerge disappointed from their hiding-place, he ignores her distress "

We can imagine we see him go nosing about. So he will be the man to suggest to the King :

My lord, he's going to his mother's closet ;
Behind the arras I'll convey myself,
To hear the process.

H. Granville-Barker writes : "Poor Polonius ! Were this no other than the world he has so successfully learnt to live in, where words are potent and ambassadors correctly come and go, where one so pleasantly 'hunts .... the trail of policy', or may with a 'bait of falsehood' take a carp of truth,' and

Of wisdom and of reach,
With windlasses and with assays of bias
By indirections and directions out .....

Where human nature must perforce become

As 'twere a thing a little soiled i' the working but to no coarse effect than that a prince may reduce your daughter and your son be debauched in Paris—were life, in sum, simply the sort of clever game he thinks it, he then would be the man he so complacently feels himself so be, the tried and wish 'assistant for a state', who has never

positively said ' 'tis so'
When it proved otherwise.........

whose never-lacking advice has only to be followed for all to be well ! But Shakespeare shows us, by a harsher light, a very different picture ; of a silly old gentleman pettily manoeuvring among passions and forces that are dark to him. No one wishes him ill. But he will meddle. And at last a sword-thrust, meant for his master incontinently ends him."

**Laertes**—Laertes would be a Polonius but more sagacious and shrewder if he were to grow old. Polonius might have been like Laertes in his younger days. At any rate we see that Laertes, like his father, lectures Ophelia and seems to be a little more concerned that the father at the risk she is running by listening readily to Hamlet's vows of love :

Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,
If with two credent ear you list his songs;
Or lose your heart.

He makes an eloquent sermon on beauty and chastity, and the risks to which they are exposed. There is a single instance of retort even from Ophelia to his preaching.

But, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the prim rose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own reed.

Perhaps unconsciously Ophelia pictures the life Laertes is living in Paris. We may guess that the life of "reckless libertine" that Laertes is living in Paris is pretty well-known to the Court in Denmark. So when Polonius is sending him again to Paris, like a good father, worldly-wise, he gives him sound advice in every detail of behaviour; so when he sends Reynaldo with money and letters for Laertes, he gives Reynaldo elaborate instructions how to find out every thing about his son in Paris:

And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlasses and assays of bias,
By indirections find directions out,
So by my former lecture and advice
Shall you my son.

Laertes returns from Paris on hearing of the reported death of his father. The death of Polonius seems to be rather a tough job for the King. He confides to Gertrude:

Her brother is in secret come from France,
Feeds on his wonder, keeps, himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death.

Then he bursts into the King's presence, while the Danes who have rallied round him, wait outside. He is a little theatrical here:

To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
.......................................................
Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged
Most thoroughly for my father.

The King rises equal to the occasion, and disarms Laertes's wrath with a little tact. Then they enter into a pact; they will

have a fencing match for which Laertes will choose "a sword unbated," which Hamlet, being "most generous and free from all contriving," will neither notice nor suspect. Laertes proposes to have his sword tipped with a deadly poison. The King caps it with a promise to have a poisoned drink ready for Hamlet when he is "hot and dry" after the bout. Each outbids the other in villainy. The upshot of this plot is that the Queen drinks the poisoned cup, intended for Hamlet, that Hamlet wounds Laertes with the atter's venomed sword and with the same sword stabs the King. Laertes confesses, "I am justly kill'd with my own treachery." Laertes with his easy morality, while he can preach so well to his sister, becomes a ready instrument of the King's villainy but he has the grace to confess his crime, but the King has none.

There is one point which needs to be discussed. Laertes is pointed out by critics as a man of action, as contrasted with Hamlet. 'A nature such as this would have been little shocked by a mother's infidelity. Had Laertes been in Hamlet's place the King would not have lived another hour after the discovery of his guilt." That the position is different in the case of Hamlet, is not recognized by these critics. The difference in temperament and outlook between Hamlet and Laertes is also a factor to reckon with. Revenge of his father's death is not a mere private matter with Hamlet; Claudius has killed his father and seized the crown with the support of the people (who of course do not know that he is a murderer of his predecessor) and the revenge thus becomes the demand of public justice. Hamlet is a man of nice scruples ; he cannot merely trust the word of the ghost—he must satisfy himself of the guilt of Claudius the confirmation of which comes from the play-scene. For Laertes the matter is simpler. Hamlet has killed his father, and the duty of Laertes is to revenge it, the sooner the better. How 'the man of action' accomplishes it—that is to be seen. We reproduce here H. Granville-Barker's analysis of the case. "And when the true culprit (*i. e.*, Hamlet) known and reported to be again within his reach—he is ready straightway.

To cut the throat i' the church,

even that pleasant contrast with Hamlet's late refusal to kill the praying Claudius lest he should spare him hell fire. Yet the next moment this 'very noble youth' is bettering an already scoundrelly plan to assure him his revenge with a secretly sharpened sword by proposing to poison it too. Conventional virtue

strangely belied; our edifying young counsellor of the earlier scene with his sister turned the wrong side out indeed!"

Then he points out the difference between Hamlet and Laertes when Hamlet is accused of failing to act unlike Laertes: "It looks very much as if—lest, misled by his self-depreciation, we misinterpret Hamlet's failings—he (*i. e.*, Shakespeare) now wished to show us *what moral instablity may be, and to what sort of nature it properly belongs. Morally* unstable Hamlet is not. His

thinking too precisely on the event.........

may sap his resolution, but it sharpens, not blunts his sense of right and wrong. Laertes—swayed by every passion and rash in action; suspicious as all unreasoning people are, but the more blind to flattery—proves wax in the clever fingers of the King. He is too ignorant of himself to be, by that banal precept, true to himself, and he can be cajoled and provoked into the ignoblest crime."

**Horatio**: for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blessed are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she pleases. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's care, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.

This is how Hamlet esteems his friend, Horatio. We have to take Hamlet's word for his friend's character. In the play Horatio is a mere on-looker having little to do with the action of the play. Yet Horatio is essential to the play. Hamlet must have some body to look to, to communicate his thoughts to. But as there is little action for Horatio in the play, there is no means of judging his character adequately. Hamlet makes him out to be a man of balanced will and sound judgment—a man always self-possessed and dispassionately observant of the things of life Hamlet fairly judges human character, and we have no reason to challenge his judgment here. But there is something common between the two objectivity of outlook and a desire for fair play and justice. In Horatio Hamlet admires all that he personally lacks—balanced will, cultivated intelligence, chastened affection, controlled passion, superiority to joys and sorrows. It is after all a Stoic ideal. It involves a deeper issue here. Horatio may be the

picture of the rational man—which is the aim and objective of Stoicism. Shakespeare himself seems to have been imbued with Stoicism.

Schucking writes, "It is not surprising, therefore, that in a certain sense nearly all the tragedies of Shakespeare show the antithesis of the Stoic doctrine of the rational man. That what is tragic in the non-stoic, in other words the man not governed by reason, should have slowly become to Shakespeare almost the essence of tragedy, may not be due simply to a philosophic theory, but to his terrible experience of life—in point to face to the lamentable fall of Essex, and of his own patron Southampton (1601), For no dramatist has ever written a more impressive tragedy about the sudden destruction of a hero whose path is laid amongst the highest in the land and who falls because, blinded by his passions, he cannot be guided by reason, than the tragedy of Essex, written by history itself."

Perhaps Horatio has been designedly kept apart from the action of the play. Hamlet turns to him for relief from the storm and stress of life, above which he is placed. We may also contemplate him as a serene and unclouded mind, yes, unclouded by passion, that true to the kindred points of heaven and earth, pursues its path—an objectification of Shakespeare's ideal. We do not know that he is pre-eminently a man of action—and we have no reason to believe that Shakespeare admires most a man of action.

**Rosencrantz and Guildenstern**: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Hamlet's school-friends like Horatio. But how unlike Horatio they are! They are false friends, set against Horatio, the true friend. It takes Hamlet no time to find them out He would have treated them as graciously as he does Horatio. But their looks and manner, the way they talk make them suspect. Hamlet perceive at once that they are the agents of the King—and violently reacts against them. They throw out a feeler to Hamlet, hinting at his ambition. Hamlet is already on his guard and self withdrawn—and his manner with them becomes cold and formal. But they would not give him over: they must do the job assigned to them. After some quarrying with words, Hamlet losses patience with them, and is quite blunt: "You were sent for, and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour. I know the good king and queen have sent for you." This analysis of his misanthropy, meant to lure them to a false scent. Then they talk about the players lately arrived, and incidentally

Hamlet has a fling at Claudius: "It is not very strange; for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mow at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty and hundred ducats a-piece for his picture in little." It provokes no comment from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. At the end of the play-scene Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have another rebuff from Hamlet when they try to probe him. When they later demand of Hamlet where he has put away the dead body of Polonius, Hamlet tells them plainly what they are: they soak up, like a sponge, the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities; they do the King the best service; "when he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and sponge, you shall be dry again." Finally Hamlet is sent to England with these two creatures, with sealed letters from the King, and by a substitution of letters, Hamlet manages to send them to death, for which he has been intended. Their death does not touch his conscience at all: "They did make love to this employment."

> 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
> Between the pass and fell incensed points
> Of mighty opposites.

H. Granville-Barker writes, "Fit epitaph for them, doubtless; and the fate of the nonentity who yields himself in complacent ignorance to civil employment has its due place in tragedy."

### Opinions of Critics

**Logan Pearsal Smith**—There is yet another aspect of Shakespeare's power in which among all character-creators who followed in his footsteps, he stands alone. The people in the works of other playwrights or novelists, however living, are yet perspicuous beings, we see their motives and understand them in a way we seldom or never understand people in real life. Real people will now and then surprise and even astonish us with what they say and do; we can never, quite predict their future actions; but this element of inexplicability, which at the same time invites and eludes analysis, Shakespeare has given to characters like Falstaff, and Hamlet and Cleopatra. Dr. Bradley finely says, 'they are inexhaustible. You feel that, if they were alive and you spent your whole life with them...they would continue, every day to surprise, perplex, and delight you. And they remain for us like certain personages in history, like Mary Queen of Scots, like Queen Elizabeth, like Napolean, the subject of infinite discussion. Our sense of their reality is heightened and quickened by our inability to see through and find

any formula to explain them. Of all of these characters the most baffling is Hamlet ; and the fact that we cannot explain him, that he seems unable to explain himself, is perhaps what makes the imaginery being seem in a way more real than any real person who ever lived.

**S. L. Bethell** –*Hamlet* betrays frequent signs of immaturity and experiment. To dispute the strength and depth and brilliance of the play would be absurd ; but as poetic drama it cannot compare in quality with the later tragedies. Its greater popularity on the stage is due to sheer 'entertainment value'; and it is a favourite with the critics because its imperfections leave more room for discussion, and the peculiar character of its hero provides a fascinating subject for every variety of arm-chair quackery.

Approached from what I believe to be the practical standpoint of audience psychology, *Hamlet* provides two excellent examples of the conventions I am to consider... Depersonalisation results from the simplest form of episodic intensification where the writer has so concentrated on the content of a speech as, apparently, to have ignored the speaker's identity. The queen's description of Ophelia's death (*Hamlet* IV. vii. 167) may but be understood in this way. Taking it naturalistically, we should have to speak of her as 'softening,' or "showing an unusual depth of sympathy"; to be thorough we should, of course, include her poetic nature. On the same lines, a more sinister interpretation is possible, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the naturalistic approach. Why was Ophelia allowed to drown, if Gertrude, or whoever first reported the incident, was at hand to observe it so closely ? We might well claim Gertrude as accessory after the fact ; and her speech then becomes both hypocritical and an ingenuous, if tacit, admission of her own negligence and guilt. Even approaching the matter with due regard for Shakespeare's conventional treatment of character, we are bound to concede a certain inconsistency. Gertrude's account of Ophelia is persumably, similar in principle to the villain's recognition of the hero's virtues : it is an objective statement, with no psychological implication. Nevertheless, it differs from Oliver or Orlando, for example, since in its whole length, there is no reference to the speaker's own nature but attention is entirely concentrated on Ophelia, whose death is described with lyrical emotion. Gertrude loses her identity during an entire speech, so that she may perform the part of a messenger to inform us of Ophelia's end. Such depersonalisation is purely a matter of con-

venience and economy. It is rendered plausible by the poetry ; there is nothing in its elegiac strains to remind us of the queen who exchanged 'Hyperion for a satyr' (I. ii. 140).

The satyr himself, King Claudius, has one scene in which, through episodic intensification, he is endowed with a character quite different from that which normally he sustains. Claudius is the villain of the piece, a smiling villain, with a suave, disarming manner ; but faced with the Laertes, uprising, he suddenly displays a surprising combination of quiet courage and royal dignity :

What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like ?
Let him go, Gertrude ; do not fear our person :
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will. Tell me Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed ? Let him go, Gertrude,
Speak, man. (IV. v. 120).

This apparent change of nature may, of course, be explained on sound psychological principles ; but such an explanation would scarcely be consistent with the usual simplicity of Shakespeare's characterisation. The alternative is episodic intensification, this time sustained throughout an episode of some length. Hamlet, the real hero, is off the stage—gone a prisoner to England ; we already have a villain in Laertes, or at least an exhibition of lawless and uncontrolled fury ; and a scene is always better for the strong contrast of two opponents. Claudius falls naturally into the hero's role. Moreover, in those days a good royalist could hardly refuse so admirable an opportunity to present royalty at its best, standing calm and superior, hedged with divinity against the forces of rebellion and disorder. The old Claudius is therefore set aside for a time—replaced by a dignified figure with whom we are bound to sympathise ; the scene itself is strengthened, and any political feeling aroused is strictly as it ought to be.

**Harley Granville-Barker**—There is more than one tentative at Hamlet in earlier work. Facets of him show already in Romeo and Richard II, Jaques is the 'melancholy man derided ; and in Brutus, the sensitive philosopher misgivingly impelled to action, the likeness is distinct. Shakespeare could not have his way with Brutus. He had too much respect for Plutarch and the stoic Romans were spiritual strangers to him. But here clear-

ly seen, if not yet fully felt, is the man whose tragedy is within him and where else, if it can but be shown, do as true tragedy lie ? What he now needs is super material to work upon ; and this he finds in the story and play of *Hamlet*. We can only guess at the changes he made and how much of the Hamlet we have he found there. But with the character already half ripe in his mind we can, I think, detect him developing it further out of the very obligations of the borrowed story. And a very remarkable process this is ; a masterpiece in workshop economy, did nothing more masterly come out of it ? In the older play there was apparently much ado about Hamlet's shamming madness. This was his protection while he plotted against the King, and it may have furnised incidents enough to fill up the time between the Ghost's first crying 'Revenge' and the final catastrophe, if there were 'whole.. hands full of tragical speeches' to be delivered besides. Shakespeare takes over this device. He could hardly have done otherwise. Hamlet without his madness would not have been Hamlet at all. But though it allows for an amusing passage or so with Polonius, some oracular talk with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and remains an effective ambush against the King, beyond this—if it is to be simple shamming—it must prove more hindrance than help. For how can he develop Hamlet's character if the man is to be continually behind a mask ? There can be revealing soliloquies, of course, and the candour of the friendship with Horatio will be useful. But with the Queen, and with Ophelia, here also a Hamlet feelingly himself is needed. Nor can an artificially antic disposition support scenes of crisis, nor carry a tragedy of character to its consummation. So Shakespeare's Hamlet is impelled beyond simple shamming. Yet it cannot be into sheer inconsequent lunacy, for there is no making that dominate a play either. Is not this the origin of the alloy of sanity and insanity, pretence and reality, which we vainly try to resolve into its elements again ?

Shakespeare does marvels with the Hamlet who is neither mad nor sane, both 'mad in craft' and 'punished with sore distraction' ; the victim–as we all at some time feel we are–of the world's 'sane' view of his 'insane' perplexities ; the man–as which of us has not been ?–at war within himself, and a traveller with that passport, into strange twilight regions of the soul. But he cannot, for all his skill, so assimilate character and story that no incongruities appear. For the two are of a different dramatic

nature. To do this he would have had to re-cast the play's whole scheme. He will not let his Hamlet suffer ; but the other characters and their share in the action inevitably must.

........................................................

But the character of Hamlet suffers too. Is it not odd, when we are studying it, how many of its details will, without the keenest watchfulness, escape us, and that students should still dispute the significance of the most salient things about it ? Ought we to be able to ask so many—quite intelligent—questions ? It is partly, of course, that Hamlet himself is struggling amid obscurities and contradictions, and here is our genius of the workshop, as usual, not only adapting means to end, but end the means and making capital out of shortcomings. And the result stands the test of performance, which was all he had to care about. But put the play—as the student has a right to on the dissecting table and the flaw, and I think the cause of it, is apparent. Shakespeare has not—paradox though this may seem finally *dramatised* Hamlet. Here is the character at which he has had more than one immature and fragmentary try, fully and vividly imagined at last what character was ever more so ? But he does not submit it to the final discipline which would make an integral part of the play......The play, when he has finished with it may be a masterpiece of the workshop, but with Hamlet himself he is pioneering a new world of Drama.

**John Masefield**—*Hamlet* is the most baffling of the great plays. It is the tragedy of a man and an action continually baffled by wisdom. The man is too wise. The dual action, pressing in both cases to complete an event, cannot get past his wisdom into the world. The action in one case is a bad one. It is, simply murder. In the other, and more important case, it is according to our scheme, also a bad one. It is revenge or at best, the taking of blood for blood. In the Shakespearean scheme it is not revenge, it is justice, and therefore neither good nor bad but necessary. The situation which causes the tragedy is one very common in Shakespeare's system. Life has been wrenched from her course. Wrenching is necessary to bring her back to her course or to keep her where she is. Hamlet is a man who understands too humanly to wish to wrench either this way or that, and too shrewdly to be himself wrenched by grosser instrument of Fate.

.... All through the play there is the uneasiness of something trying to get done, something from outside life trying to get

into life, but baffled always because the instrument chosen is, himself, a little outside life, as the wise must be......

The powers outside life send a poor ghost to Hamlet to prompt him to an act of justice...... Hamlet is charged with the double task of executing judgment and showing mercy...... It is nothing more than the fulfilling of the kingly office so bloodily seized by Claudius before the opening of the play. At this point, it may be well to consider the society in which the kingly office is to be exercised.

The society is created with Shakespeare's fullest power......, It is the image of the world as intellect is made to feel it. It is a society governed by the enemies of intellect, by the sensual and the worldly, by deadly sinners and the philosophers of bread and cheese. The King is a drunken, incestuous murderer, who fears intellect. The Queen is a false woman, who cannot understand intellect. Polonius is a counsellor who suspects intellect. Laertes is a boar who destroys intellect. The courtiers are parasites who flourish on the decay of intellect. Fortinbras, bright and noble, marching to the drum to win a dunghill, gives a colour to the folly. The only friends of the wise man are Horatio, the school fellow, and the leader of a cry of players.

The task set by the dead is a simple one. All tasks are simple to the simple-minded. To the delicate and complex mind so much of life is bound up with every act that any violent act involves not only a large personal sacrifice of ideal, but a tearing-up by the roots of half the order of the world. Wisdom is founded upon justice, but justice, to the wise man, is more a scrupulous quality in the mind that the doing of expedient acts upon sinners. Hamlet is neither "weak" nor "unpractical," as so many call him. What he hesitates to do may be necessary or even just, as the world goes, but it is a defilement of personal ideals, difficult for a wise mind to justify. It is so great a defilement, that death seems preferable to action and existence alike.

THE TRAGEDY OF

# HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK

## *DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark
HAMLET, Son to the late, and nephew to the present King.
POLONIUS, Lord Chamberlain.
HORATIO, friend to Hamlet.
LAERTES, Son to Polonius.
VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, OSRIC, A Gentleman, } Courtiers.
A Priest.
MARCELLUS, BERNARDO, } Officers.
FRANCISCO, a Soldier.

REYNALDO, Servant to Polonius.
Players.
Two clowns, grave-diggers.

FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway.
A Captain
English Ambassadors.

GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark and mother to Hamlet.
OPHELIA, Daughter to Polonius.

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors, Messengers, and other Attendants.

Ghost of Hamlet's Father.

SCENE: *Denmark.*

## ACT I

SCENE I. *Elsinore. A Platform before the Castle.*

FRANCISCO *at his post. Enter to him* BERNARDO.

*Ber.* Who's there ?
*Fran.* Nay, answer me : stand, and unfold yourself.
*Ber.* Long live the king !
*Fran.* Bernardo ?
*Ber.* He.
*Fran.* You come most carefully upon your hour.
*Ber.* 'Tis now struck twelve ; get thee to bed, Francisco.
*Fran.* For this relief much thanks ; 'tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.
*Ber.* Have you had quiet guard ?
*Fran.* Not a mouse stirring.
*Ber.* Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.
*Fran.* I think I hear them. Stand, ho ! Who is there ?

*Enter* HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

*Hor.* Friends to this ground.
*Mar.* And liegemen to the Dane.
*Fran.* Give you good night.
*Mar.* O, farewell, honest soldiers :
Who hath relieved you ?
*Fran.* Bernardo hath my place.
Give you good night. [*Exit.*
*Mar.* Holla ! Bernardo !
*Ber.* Say,
What, is Horatio there ?
*Hor.* A piece of him.
*Ber.* Welcome, Horatio : welcome, good Marcellus.
*Mar.* What, has this thing appear'd again to-night ?
*Ber.* I have seen nothing.
*Mar.* Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us :
Therefore I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night,
That if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes, and speak to it.

## ACT I

SCENE I. *Elsinore. A Platform before the Castle.*

FRANCISCO *at his post. Enter to him* BERNARDO.

*Ber.* Who is on duty ?

*Fran.* It is for you to stand where you are and tell me first who you are. Password first please.

*Ber.* Long live the King !

*Fran.* You are Bernardo ?

*Ber.* Yes, I am Bernardo.

*Fran.* You are here indeed in due time.

*Ber.* It is now twelve o' clock. You may retire, Francisco.

*Fran.* I thank you for relieving me in time. It is bitterly cold and I am much depressed.

*Ber.* I hope nothing came in your way when you were on guard.

*Fran.* Not a mouse came my way.

*Ber.* Good night, then. If you meet Horatio and Marcellus ; send them on for they are watching with me.

*Fran.* I hear they are come. Who is there ? Stop !

*Enter* HORATIO and MARCELLUS.

*Hor.* We are friends.

*Mar.* And we are loyal subjects of the King of Denmark.

*Fran.* Good night to you.

*Mar.* Good night, my friend. Who has taken your place ?

*Fran.* Bernardo is in my place. Good night again. [*Exit.*

*Mar.* Ho, there ! Bernardo !

*Ber.* Is Horatio with you ?

*Hor.* Yes, I am here.

*Ber.* You are both welcome, Horatio and Marcellus.

*Mar.* Did the spirit appear to-night again ?

*Ber.* I have not seen anything.

*Mar.* Horatio says that it is all but a figment, and will not credit anything about this dreadful sight, twice seen by us. Therefore I have begged him to accompany me ; he is to watch with us every minute as the night passes—and then he can say whether we are right, and speak to the spirit too.

*Hor.* Tush, tush, 't will not appear.
*Ber.* Sit down a while;
And let us once again assail your ears
That are so fortified against our story,
What we have two nights seen.
*Hor.* Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.
*Ber.* Last Night of all,
When yond same star that's westward from the pole
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one,—

*Enter Ghost.*

*Mar.* Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!
*Ber.* In the same figure, like the king that's dead.
*Mar.* Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.
*Ber.* Looks it not like the King? mark it, Horatio.
*Hor.* Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder.
*Ber.* It would be spoke to.
*Mar.* Question it, Horatio.
*Hor.* What art thou, that usurp'st this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? by heaven I charge thee, speak!
*Mar.* It is offended.
*Ber.* See, it stalks away!
*Hor.* Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee speak!
[*Exit Ghost.*
*Mar.* 'Tis gone, and will not answer.
*Ber.* How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale:
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on 't?
*Hor.* Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of my own eyes.
*Mar.* Is it not like the king?
*Hor.* As thou art to thyself:
Such was the very armour he had on
When he the ambitious Norway combated;
So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle,
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.
'Tis strange.

*Hor.* It is all rubbish. It will not appear.

*Ber.* Please sit down, and let us make another attempt to convince you when you so positively reject our story—what we have seen for two nights running.

*Hor.* All right, let us sit down and hear Bernardo tell the story again.

*Ber.* In particular last night when the star you see west of the polar star had veered round to the point where it now shines, Marcellus and myself then on duty, the clock striking one—

*Enter Ghost.*

*Mar.* No more talk, please ; behold, there is the spirit again.

*Ber.* He bears the likeness of the king who is dead.

*Mar.* You are a scholar ; address the spirit, Horatio.

*Ber.* Does not the spirit look like the late king ? Observe him, Horatio.

*Hor.* He is most like the late king. I am distracted by fear and perplexity.

*Ber.* You should speak to the spirit.

*Mar.* Yes, speak to him, Horatio.

*Hor.* Who are you that creep out of your grave so late at night and wear the armour in which the late King of Denmark formerly marched ? Gracious heaven ! Say who you are ?

*Mar.* He is displeased.

*Ber.* There, he strides off.

*Hor.* Do not go, but say who you are. I beseech you.

[ *Exit Ghost.*

*Mar.* He is gone and will not design to answer you.

*Ber.* What do you say, Horatio ? Now you tremble and turn pale. Does not it go beyond the imagination ? What do you think of the matter ?

*Hor.* In the name of God, I could not believe it until my own eyes affirmed it.

*Mar.* Does not the spirit look like the king ?

*Hor.* As you resemble yourself. He had put on the very armour when he fought the ambitious king of Norway ; so did he look stern when in an angry exchange of words he struck down the Poles riding their sledges. It is strange.

natives of Poland vehicles

*Mar.* Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.
*Hor.* In what particular thought to work I know not;
But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.
*Mar.* Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,
Why this same strict and most observant watch
So nightly toils the subject of the land,
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,
And foreign mart for implements of war;
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task
Does not divide the Sunday from the weak;
What might be toward, that this sweaty haste
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day:
Who is't that can inform me?
*Hor.* That can I;
At least the whisper goes so. Our last king,
Whose image even but now appeare'd to us,
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,
Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,
Dared to the combat; in which our valient Hamlet—
For so this side of our known world esteem'd him—
Did slay this Fortinbras; who by a seal'd compact,
Well ratifed by law and heraldry,
Did forfeit, with his life, and those his lands
Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror:
Against the which, a moiety competent
Was gaged by our king; which had return'd
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
Had he been vanquisher; as, by the same covenant
And carriage of the article design'd.
His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
Of unimproved mettle hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolutes,
For food and diet, to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in't: which is no other—
As it doth well appear unto our state—
But to recover of us, by strong hand
And terms compulsatory, those foresaid lands
So by his father lost: and this, I take it,
Is the main motive of our preparations,

*Mar.* Thus twice before and just at midnight he has marched past our watch.

*Hor.* I do not know what may be his intention, and all taken together, it may mean some disaster to the country.

*Mar.* Well, let us sit down, and let him who knows tell us why so strict and careful watch is kept, giving little rest to the citizens and why every day weapons of war are being made and war materials bought from abroad, why ship-builders are made to work day and night, not excepting Sunday. What might be going on when day and night there was no cessation of toil in haste. Who can tell me what it is all for ?

*Hor.* I can tell you that. It is as the rumour goes. Our late king whose phantom appeared a moment ago was, as it is known to you, provoked to battle by Fortinbras of Norway who was urged by pride and spirit of rivalry. In this fight our brave Hamlet (the late King)—for so in Denmark he is reputed, killed this Fortinbras ; and Fortinbras by a signed agreement that the law of nations and the law of honour and arms made binding, ceded all the lands that he had grabbed. A portion of equal value, staked by our King, would have gone to Fortinbras if he had been victorious, as in terms of the same agreement, Fortinbras's portion then came to Hamlet. Now young Fortinbras, impetuous and untried in experience, has recruited and hired some desperadoes on the outskirts of Denmark for an adventure that smacks of reckless courage ; the purpose of this undertaking is no less, as it now seems clear, than to win back from us by use of force those lands, lost by his father,

The source of this our watch, and the chief head
Of this post-haste and romage in the land.

*Ber.* I think it be no other but e'en so :
Well may it sort, that this portentous figure
Comes armed through our watch, so like the king
That was and is the question of these wars.

*Hor.* A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets :
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
Disasters in the sun ; and the moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse :
And even the like precurse of fierce events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen.

*Re-enter Ghost.*

But soft, behold ! lo, where it comes again !
I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion !
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me :
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
Speak to me :
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which happily, foreknowing may avoid,
O, speak !
Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
[ *The cock crows.*
Speak of it : stay, and speak ! Stop it, Marcellus.

*Mar.* Shall I strike at it with my partisans ?

*Hor.* Do, if it will not stand.

*Ber.* 'Tis here !

*Hor.* 'Tis here ! [ *Exit Ghost.*

Our war-like preparations are, as I understand, intended to meet this threat : hence our vigilance and expeditious activity.

*Ber.* I think you are right. So it seems to be fitting that this apparition like a portent of what is to come, breaks into our watch, going in armour like the late King who was involved in these wars, and is still the cause of dispute.

*Hor.* Just as a speck of dust may irritate the eye, so this apparition perturbs our mind. In the glorious days of Rome a little before Julius Caesar met his fate, from the graves escaped the buried dead, and, in their winding sheet they screeched and chattered in the streets of Rome. There were other portents such as comets, bloody dews, dimmed sun ; the moon which rules the waves of the sea had a sickly hue from an eclipse as if it were the last day of Judgment. Heaven and earth have thrown out similar portents of fearful harm, and they are the fore-runners of our fate and accidents that are to follow upon our country and countrymen.

*Re-enter Ghost.*

But, come, there is the spirit again. I will put myself in the way of the ghost at the risk of being harmed by him. Stop, apparition ! If you can speak in human language, speak to me. Tell me if anything can be done that will give you peace and rest, and that it will be a good thing for me to do. If you know anything of what is going to happen to our country, which can be forestalled by foreknowledge, tell us, I pray, or if you have treasure, wrongfully obtained, and hoarded in your life-time, and left buried in the earth, for which, it is said, spirits often visit the earth, tell us. [*The cock crows.*] Marcellus, stop the departing spirit.

*Mar.* Shall I strike him with my spear !

*Hor.* Do, if he will not stop.

*Ber.* Let me get at the spirit ; here he is.

*Hor.* The spirit is here by me. [ *Exit Ghost.*

*Mar.* 'Tis gone!
We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.
*Ber.* It was about to speak, when the cock crew.
*Hor.* And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day, and at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine: and of the truth herein
This present object made probation.
*Mar.* It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.
*Hor.* So have I heard and do in part believe it.
But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill:
Break we our watch up; and by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him:
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?
*Mar.* Let's do it, I pray; and I this morning know
Where we shall find him most conveniently. [*Exeunt.*

## SCENE II. *A Room of State in the Castle*

*Flourish. Enter the* KING, QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, Lords, *and* Attendants.

*King.* Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green; and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature

*Mar.* The spirit is gone. In going to strike at the spirit, we show ourselves to be airily lofty and make a mistake. For the spirit, like the air, is incapable of being wounded, and our blows which do not hurt him, put us to shame.

*Ber.* The spirit was about to speak when the cock crowed.

*Hor.* On hearing the cock crow the ghost seemed to start, and moved away, like a guilty creature on hearing a summon that is feared. I have heard that the cock, who is the herald of the morning, awakens the day with his clarion cry, and that the spirits who are abroad, either in sea or fire, in earth or air—the spirits that come out of their graves and walk about–hasten away to their graves. The truth of this is now demonstrated by the movement of this apparition.

*Mar.* The spirit vanished as soon as the cock crowed. It is a popular belief that at the approach of the Cristmas season, celebrating the birth of Christ the cock crows all night, and during that period no spirit comes out of the grave, and no harmful influence is at work at night, either from planets, or fairies or witches—the time is so sacred and blessed.

*Hor.* I have also heard like this, and to some extent believe it. But look the approach of the beautiful morning in the east and it is now the time for us to be off. If you take my advice, we should go to young Hamlet, and communicate to him all what we have seen to-night. For, though, the ghost remained mum to us, I am sure, it will definitely talk to him. If you agree with me, we shall tell him all, as we are bound in duty and love to do.

*Mar.* Yes please, we will do it and this morning I happen to know where we shall find him easily.

## SCENE II. *A Room of State in the Castle.*

*Flourish. Enter* the KING, QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, Lords, *and* Attendants.

*King.* The death of our dear brother, Hamlet, is still fresh in our memory and it was becoming of us that we bore sorrow in our hearts and the whole kingdom wore a woeful look, but our good sense has moderated our grief to the end that while we cherish his memory, we do not forget what is due to ourselves.

That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometimes sister now our queen,
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,—
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,—
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along. For all, our thanks,
Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Colleagued with this dream of his advantage,
He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
Now for ourself, and for this time of meeting:
Thus much the business is: we have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,—
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose,—to suppress
His further gait herein; in that the levies,
The lists and full proportions are all made
Out of his subject: and we here despatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway,
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the king more than the scope
Of these delated articles allow.
Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

*Cor.*, *Vol.* In that, and all things, will we show our duty.

*King.* We doubt it nothing: heartily farewell.

[*Exeunt* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; what is 't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane.

Therefore, with joy despoiled, with a strange mixture of expectant luck and flow of tears, with the transposition of mirth to funeral and of mourning to marriage, I have married my former sister-in-law, now the queen and joint-ruler with me of this kingdom, which is busy with war-like preparations. In this matter I have sought your superior opinion and consent which have been freely offered. Thanks to you for this. Now the matter that concerns us is, as you know, that young Fortinbras, either supposing that we are weak or thinking that the State has fallen into disorder on the death of the late King, has been encouraged by this illusory opportunity, and demands the surrender of the lands, ceded by his father in legal terms to the late King, who was so full of valour. So the matter is disposed of. Now let me say what we are doing and why we have called the Council. We have written to the King of Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, who lying helpless and bed-ridden is not likely to hear anything of the late undertaking of his nephew, and urged him to stop any further progress of Fortinbras in this matter, for after all Fortinbras has raised an army from among his own subjects and made all war-like preparations in his country. And I am now despatching you, Cornelius, and you, Voltimand, to bear this message to the King of Norway, your power being limited to the terms, detailed in the document. Farewell, expedite the performing of your duty.

*Cor. Vol.* In all respects our duty will be done, and there shall be left over nothing needed to be done.

*King.* I have no doubt about that. Farewell and good wishes. [*Exeunt* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

And now, Laertes what is your matter ? You said something about a petition. What do you wish, Laertes ? You cannot make any reasonable demand that will be denied. I do not think that

And lose your voice : what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking ?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes ?
*Laer.* My dread Lord.
Your leave and favour to return to France,
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.
*King.* Have you your father's leave ? What says Polonius ?
*Pol.* He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition, and at last
Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent :
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.
*King.* Take thy fair hour, Laertes ; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will !
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,—

*Ham.* [*Aside*] A little more than kin, and less than kind.
*King.* How is it that the clouds still hang on you ?
*Ham.* Not so, my lord ; I am too much i' the sun.
*Queen.* Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy veiled lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust :
Thou know'st 'tis common ; all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.
*Ham.* Ay, madam, it is common.
*Queen.* If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee ?
*Ham.* Seems, madam ! nay, it is ; I know not "seems."
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy respiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected, haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly : these indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play :

anything you wish for, shall not be granted by me, or that it is anything that you cannot properly ask for. The head cannot be more conjunctive to the heart and the hand, more accessory to the mouth than the King of Denmark is under obligation to your father. What would you have, Laertes ?

*Laer.* My dreaded lord, your gracious permission to return to France from where I came very willingly to Denmark to show my loyalty to you at your crowning. My loyal duty performed, I wish to return to France—and it depends on your kind permission.

*King.* Do you have your father's permission ? What does Polonius say ?

*Pol.* He has, my lord, secured my permission after he begged for it incessantly, when finally I had to yield to his desire. I pray that you may give him leave to go.

*King.* The time is yours then, Laertes, and spend it as you desire to the best of purposes. Now let me turn to my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

*Ham.* [*Aside*]. I may be nearer than a kinsman, but with little natural feeling or kindly disposition that should go with such relationship.

*King.* Why are you still wrapt in gloom ?

*Ham.* It is not the fact my lord ; I go about in the sun.

*Queen.* Good Hamlet, you should abandon now your look of mourning and give a friendly look to the King of Denmark. You cannot for ever go about with downcast eyes, as if looking for your noble father who is now dust. You know that death is no new or rare thing ; the living must die—their mortality giving way to immortal life.

*Ham.* Yes, madam, as you say, death is no new thing.

*Queen.* If it be so, why does it seem to be so particular with you ?

*Ham.* You say *seem*, madam. But it is the fact, and no seeming. My dark cloak, my black mourning germents, my heavy, prolonged sighs, the tears ever flowing, my sad looks, and all other shows of grief cannot reveal me truly. These are

But I have that within which passeth show ;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

*King.* 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father :
But, you must know, your father lost a father,
That father lost, lost his ; and the survivor bound
In final obligation for some term
To do obsequious sorrow but to preserve
In obstinate condolement is a course
Of impious stubbornness ; 'tis unmanly grief :
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschool'd :
For what we know must be and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense.
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart ? Fie ! 'tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd, whose common theme
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
From the first corse till he that died to-day,
"This must be so." We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing woe, and think of us
As of a father : for let the world take note,
You are the most immediate to our throne ;
And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his son,
Do I impart toward you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,
It is most retrograde to our desire :
And we beseech you, bend you to remain
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin and our son.

*Queen.* Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet :
I pray thee, stay with us ; go not to Wittenberg.

*Ham.* I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

*King.* Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply :
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come ;
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart : in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,

things outward, and any man can enact them. What is within me, cannot be expressed. All that you see is but outward manifestation.

*King*. It is good and creditable for you that you honour the memory of your father and mourn him as a son should. But you should know that your father lost his, and that father lost his, and that it is the duty of a son to mourn his father dead for a definite period of time. But if one is to carry on mourning, and is determined not to cease it, it is an obstinacy which God cannot pardon. Such grief shows weakness in the man. It shows a will which God cannot approve, a heart unstable, a mind without power of endurance, an understanding ignorant and untrained. Why should we in our surly resistance, indulge in excess of grief for what must happen and is a very common phenomenon. Oh ! it is a rebellion against God, against the dead and against nature ; reason will condemn this obsession with the death of one's father when nature cries out that death is the counterpart of life—that death must follow life. We beg of you to be done with this futile sorrow and think of me as you do of a father. Let people see that you are the next heir to the throne and that I bear you as much affection as the most loving father can for his son. If you want to go back to the University of Wittenberg, we disapprove it strongly, and we request you to stay here and give us delight and comfort—as our foremost courtier, kinsman and our son.

*Queen*. I hope your mother's prayer will not go unheeded. Stay with us ; do not go to Wittenberg.

*Ham*. I shall obey you as best as I can, madam.

*King*. That reply of yours is gratifying to us. You will be in the same position as ours. Madam, let us go. This polite and free acquiescence of Hamlet touches my heart. Let this be

But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
And the king's rouse the heaven shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder.—Come away.

[*Flourish. Exeunt all but* HAMLET.

*Ham.* O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew !
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self slaughter ! O God ! O God !
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world !
Fie on't ! ah fie ! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this !
But two months dead ! nay, not so much, not two :
So excellent a king ; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr ; so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth !
Must I remember ? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on : and yet, within a month—
Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman !—
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears :—why she, even she,—
O God ! a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer,—married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules : within a month ;
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets !
It is not, nor it cannot come to, good :
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue !

*Enter* HORATIO MARCELLUS *and* BERNARDO.

*Hor.* Hail to your lordship !

*Ham.* I am glad to see you well :
Horatio,—or I do forget myself.

*Hor.* The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

celebrated by health drinking, attended by gun shot, which will be echoed from heaven. Come away.

[*Flourish. Exeunt all but* HAMLET.

*Ham.* I wish that this bulk of flesh would drop off and melt as dew. If self-destruction had not been forbidden by God ! O God ! O God ! How the way of life seems to me unsavoury, repellent and futile. It is a shame ! The world is a garden where weeds grow and flourish ; it is run over by all coarse and vulgar things. I could not imagine such depravity. My father is but two months dead, not even two months. He was so excellent a king that the present one, compared to him is just like a satyr to Hyperion. He loved my mother so much that he would not let the winds touch her cheek rudely. O heavens ! it is painful to recall all this. I remember how she never parted with him as if her hunger grew more with feeding. Yet within a month—it is too painful to think of it—I must say that woman must be all weakness and frivolity. It must be no more than a month, or before the shoes she wore when she followed the funeral procession, had lost their shine—she then resembling Niobe running with tears, why, she, even she, O God ! a beast that has no faculty of reason, would have mourned longer—married my uncle, my father's brother, but no more like my father than I am like Hercules. She married within a month before the insincere tears she shed could redden her eyes. She was in a depraved haste to enter into an incestuous marriage with my uncle. It is not good, and nothing good can come out of it. But I must keep silent and let my heart break within.

*Enter* HORATIO, MARCELLUS, and BERNARDO.

*Hor.* I greet you, my lord.

*Ham.* I am so pleased to see that you are well. It is Horatio, if I am not mistaken.

*Hor.* Yes, Horatio, my lord, and a poor servant of yours for ever.

*Ham.* Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you:
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?
Marcellus?

*Mar.* My good lord—

*Ham.* I am very glad to see you. [*To Ber.*] Good even, sir.
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

*Hor.* A truant disposition, good my lord.

*Ham.* I would not hear your enemy say so,
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself: I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We 'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.

*Hor.* My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

*Ham.* I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

*Hor.* Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.

*Ham.* Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked-meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!
My father!—methinks I see my father.

*Hor.* O where, my lord?

*Ham.* In my mind's eye, Horatio.

*Hor.* I saw him once; he was a goodly king.

*Ham.* He was a man; take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.

*Hor.* My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

*Ham.* Saw? who?

*Hor.* My lord, the king your father.

*Ham.* The king my father!

*Hor.* Season your admiration for a while
With an attent ear, till I may deliver,
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
This marvel to you.

*Ham.* For God's love, let me hear.

*Hor.* Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,
In the dead vast and middle of the night,
Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father,
Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,

*Ham.* Sir, you are my good friend, and no servant of mine, if you please. I should rather exchange the position with you. What brings you from Wittenberg, Horatio? Oh! you Marcellus?

*Mar.* My good lord—

*Ham.* I am pleased to see you [*To Ber.*] Good evening sir. But I want to know what brings you from Wittenberg.

*Hor.* I have a habit of playing the truant sometimes, my good lord.

*Ham.* I would not like to hear your enemy say this about you. Nor can you compel my ear to trust such a report from you. I know that you are not one to run away. But what is your business in Elsinore ? All that we can do is to make you a confirmed drunkard before you go.

*Hor.* My lord, I came to attend your father's funeral.

*Ham.* I pray you, do not trifle with me, my fellow-student. I think you came to attend my mother's marriage.

*Hor.* My lord, it came so quickly after your father's funeral.

*Ham.* It is one way of economizing. The pastry that was baked for my father's funeral, served also the purpose of the wedding festivity. I wish I had met my deadliest enemy in heaven before I had seen that day, Horatio. I think I sometimes see my father.

*Hor.* Where, my lord ?

*Ham.* In my imagination, Horatio.

*Hor.* I saw him once ; he was an excellent king.

*Ham.* He was a man in all respects. I shall not see again another like him.

*Hor.* My lord, I think I saw him last night.

*Ham.* Saw ? Whom did you see ?

*Hor.* My lord, I saw the King, your father.

*Ham.* You saw the King, my father !

*Hor.* Moderate your amazement for a while as you listen to me. Let me tell you, on the evidence of these gentlemen, the marvellous thing.

*Ham.* In the name of God, let me hear.

*Hor* For two nights these gentlemen, Marcellus and Bernardo, on duty as sentinels, happened to see him at midnight. It was a phantom resembling your father ; like him too in full armour from head to foot, marching past them with slow,

Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them : thrice he walk'd
By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length ; whilst they, distill'd
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did ;
And I with them the third night kept the watch :
There, as they had delivered, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word may true and good,
The apparition comes. I knew your father ;
These hands are not more like.

*Ham.* But where was this ?

*Mar.* My lord, upon the platform where we watch'd.

*Ham.* Did you not speak to it ?

*Mar.* My lord I did,
But answer made it none : yet once me thought
It lifted up its head and did address
Itself to motion, like as it would speak ;
But even then the morning cock crew loud,
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away
And vanish'd from our sight.

*Ham.* 'Tis very strange.

*Hor.* As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true,
And we did think it writ down in our duty
To let you know of it.

*Ham.* Indeed, indeed sirs, but this troubles me.
Hold you the watch to-night ?

*Mar.*
*Ber.* } We do, my lord.

*Ham.* Arm'd, say you ?

*Mar.*
*Ber.* } Arm'd, my lord.

*Ham.* From top to toe ?

*Mar.*
*Ber.* } My lord, from head to foot.

*Ham.* Then saw you not his face ?

*Hor.* O, yes my, lord ; he wore his beaver up.

*Ham* What, look'd he frowningly ?

*Hor.* A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

*Ham.* Pale, or red ?

stately gait. Thrice he strode by them within the length of his staff, and they, frozen with terror, stood dumb and did not speak to him. This they told me in secret and trembling with fear. I kept watch with them the third night. The spirit came to the very point of time and in the shape, as reported to me, their each word being corroborated. I knew your father. The phantom and your father are as like each other as my hands are.

*Ham.* But where did this happen ?

*Mar.* It happened upon the platform where we kept watch.

*Ham.* Did you speak to the spirit ?

*Hor.* My lord, I did, but the spirit yielded no reply. Yet once it seemed to me that the spirit lifted up his head and was going to address me, but then the morning cock crowed loudly, and he slunk away in haste, and was seen no more.

*Ham.* It is very strange.

*Hor.* On my life, it is true, my lord. And we thought that we were dictated by our duty to tell you of this.

*Ham.* That's right. But it worries me. Do you keep watch to-night ?

*Mar.*, *Ber.* We do, my lord.

*Ham.* Did he come fully armed, you say ?

*Mar.*, *Ber.* Yes, my lord.

*Ham.* From head to foot ?

*Mar.*, *Ber.* Yes, my lord.

*Ham.* Then, you did not see his face ?

*Hor.* Surely, we did. His visor was up.

*Ham.* Did he wear a look of displeasure ?

*Hor.* It was a face, more marked by sorrow than by anger.

*Ham.* Was the face pale or flushed ?

*Hor.* Nay, very pale.
*Ham.* And fix'd his eyes upon you ?
*Hor.* Most constantly.
*Ham.* I would I had been there.
*Hor.* It would have much amazed you.
*Ham.* Very like, very like. Stay'd it long ?
*Hor.* While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.
*Mar.*, *Ber.* Longer, longer.
*Hor.* Not when I saw 't.
*Ham.* His beard was grizzled ? no ?
*Hor.* It was, as I have seen it in his life,
A sable silver'd.
*Ham.* I will watch to-night ;
Perchance 't will walk again.
*Hor.* I warrant it will.
*Ham.* If it assume my noble father's person,
I 'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,
If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,
Let it be tenable in your silence still ;
And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
Give it an understanding, but no tongue :
I will requite your loves. So, fare you well ;
Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,
I'll visit you.
*All.* Our duty to your honour.
*Ham.* Your loves, as mine to you : farewell.
[ *Exeunt all but* HAMLET.
My father's spirit in arms ! all is not well ;
I doubt some foul play : would the night were come !
Till then sit still : my soul : foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.
[*Exit.*

## SCENE III. *A Room in* POLONIUS's *House.*

*Enter* LAERTES *and* OPHELIA.

*Laer* My necessaries are embark'd : farewell :
And sister, as the winds give benefit
And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,
But let me hear from you.
*Oph.* Do you doubt that ?

*Hor.* It was very pale.

*Ham.* Did he fix his gaze upon you ?

*Hor.* Always he kept his gaze upon me.

*Ham.* I wish I had been there.

*Hor.* It would have filled you with amazement.

*Ham.* Very likely. Did the spirit stay long ?

*Hor.* He stayed as long as one could count a hundred without much haste.

*Mar.*, *Ber.* } Longer than that.

*Hor.* Not longer when I saw the spirit.

*Ham.* Was his beard grey or not ?

*Hor.* The beard was streaked with white, as I saw it when he was alive.

*Ham.* I will watch with you to-night. Perhaps the spirit will walk again.

*Hor.* I am sure he will walk to-night.

*Ham.* If the spirit takes my father's shape, I will speak to him, though hell may open its jaws wide and forbid me to speak. My request to you all is that since you have kept the matter a secret till now, breathe nothing about it. Whatever may happen to-night, keep your eyes and ears open, but your tongue shut. I will reward your love. I say good-bye to you. I shall meet you upon the platform between eleven and twelve to-night.

*All.* We are at your service.

*Ham.* Let your love be with me, as mine is with you. Farewell. [*Exeunt all but* HAMLET.

My father's spirit walks armed. Something must be wrong. I suspect some villainy. I wish the night were come. Let my soul remain quiet till then. Crimes, however hidden, will come to light.

SCENE III. *A Room in* POLONIUS's *House.*

*Enter* LAERTES *and* OPHELIA.

*Laer.* All my necessary things have been carried into the ship. Let me take leave of you. And, sister, when the winds serve, the transport is ready, do not neglect to write to me.

*Oph.* You need not have any doubt about that.

*Laer*, For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood,
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more.

*Oph.* No more but so?

*Laer.* Think it no more;
For nature, crescent, does not grow alone
In thews and bulk; but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now;
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch
The virtue of his will: but you must fear,
His greatness weigh'd his will is not his own:
For he himself is subject to his birth:
He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself; for on his choice depends
The safety and health of this whole state,
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you,
It fits your wisdom so far to believe it
As he in his particular act and place
May give his saying deed; which is no further
That the main voice of Denmark goes withal.
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,
If with too credent ear you list his songs.
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmaster'd importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it my dear sister,
And keep you in the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the moon:
Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes:
The canker galls the infants of the spring
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,
And in the morn and liquid due of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Be wary then; best safety lies in fear:
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

*Laer.* As for Hamlet and the matter of his wooing, take it but as a prevailing custom and impulse of the moment. It is just like a violet blooming in spring, yielding fragrance for a minute, and then gone. The love that Hamlet professes now, is no more than the sweet-smelling, short-lived violet.

*Oph.* No more than that ?

*Laer.* Do not take it seriously. As the body grows and expands in muscles and in size, so the mind and spirit develop inwardly and begin to function. He may love you at this moment, and his love may be free from all taint. But you must be cautious, and take into consideration his great position. His will is not free ; and because he is born a prince, he must respect his birth. He cannot shape his own destiny as an undistinguished man. The safety and welfare of the State have much to do with his choice of a life's partner ; and his choice is limited by the opinion and assent of those whom he rules. If he says that he loves you, be wise enough to believe no more of it than is borne out by his particular actions, according to time and circumstances. He can go no further than he is permitted by the will of the King of Denmark. Then consider how you may compromise your honour if you listen too credulously to his sweet words of love, or yield your heart to him, or unlock your chastity to his passionate solicitation. Ophelia, my dear sister, be careful and withhold your affection and keep out of the snare of passion. The most careful maiden makes too free with herself if she exposes her beauty to the moon. Virtue itself is not safe from slander. The cankerworn preys upon the buds of the spring before they have opened, and in the prime of youth with its susceptibility it is ready to be exposed to unwholesome influences. Be cautious then, fear will be your best security. Youth is apt to do itself wrong even when it is away from temptation.

*Oph.* I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the pirmrose path of dalliance treads
And recks not his own rede.

*Laer.* O, fear me not.
I stay too long : but here my father comes.

*Enter* POLONIUS.

A double blessing is a double grace ;
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

*Pol.* Yet here, Laertes ! Aboard, aboard, for shame !
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stay'd for. There ; my blessing with thee !
And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character. Give thy thought's no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel,
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd unfledged comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel ; but being in,
Bear't, that the opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice :
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy ; rich, not gaudy :
For the apparel oft proclaims the man ;
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be :
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all : to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell : my blessing season this in thee !

*Laer.* Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

*Pol.* The time invites you ; go, your servants tend.

*Oph.* I shall ever guard myself by the counsel you give. But, my good brother, there are some graceless priests like whom you may show me the difficult pathway to heaven, and while like one bloated by high living and heedless of consequences, you may pursue the more pleasant course of sensuality and break your own counsel.

*Laer.* Do not bother about me. I am staying too long. Here comes my father.

*Enter* POLONIUS

Here you have a chance of blessing me again, and it means good twice over to me. There is a chance of my taking my leave again.

*Pol.* You are still here, Laertes ! It is a shame that you are not yet off to the ship. The wind stands now favourable, and you are waited for. There, my blessing goes again with you ! Mind that you keep these few counsels stored in your memory. Keep your own counsel—do not blurt out what you have in mind ; nor put thought ill-ordered into action. You may get into intimacy with others, but do not descend to coarseness or vulgarity. Test the friends you have, and then hold fast to them. Do not cultivate every companion who comes your way when you know nothing of him. Be careful not to get into a quarrel, but if you are dragged into it, get it through so that your opponent may keep clear of you. Listen to everybody, but volunteer no advice of your own. Take each man's opinion, but keep your own to yourself. Let your clothes be as expensive, as your means allow, but they must not be fanciful, they may be expensive but not showy, for the dress often is the index to the man. People in France—especially those of high degree—are choice and lavish in their dress. Do not either borrow or lend money, for when you lend money, you may lose your money as well as your friend. Borrowing cuts into a thrifty habit. Be mindful of this —my last advice—above everything else ; be true to yourself and then everything will go right with you ; just as night follows day, you cannot be then in a false position with another. Farewell ; may my blessing ripen this in you !

*Laer.* I take my leave, my lord, bowing respect to you.

*Pol.* Time presses. You must be away ; your servants are waiting.

Pol. has given good advice; applicable to every

*Laer.* Farewell, Ophelia and remember well
What I have said to you.
*Oph.* 'Tis in my memory lock'd,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.
*Laer.* Farewell. [ *Exit.*
*Pol.* What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you ?
*Oph.* So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.
*Pol.* Marry, well bethought :
'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you, and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous :
If it be so—as so 'tis put on me,
And that in way of caution—I must tell you,
You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behoves my daughter and your honour.
What is between you ? give me up the truth.
*Oph.* He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders
Of his affection to me.
*Pol.* Affection ! pooh ! you speak like a green girl,
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
Do you believe his tenders, as you call them ?
*Oph.* I do not know, my lord, what I should think.
*Pol* Marry, I 'll teach you : think yourself a baby,
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly ;
Or—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
Running it thus—you 'll tender me a fool.
*Oph.* My lord, he hath importuned me with love
In honourable fashion.
*Pol.* Ay fashion you may call it ; go to, go to.
*Oph.* And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,
With almost all the holy vows of heaven.
*Pol.* Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows : these blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,
Even in their promise, as it is a-making,
You must not take for fire. From this time
Be something scanter of your maiden presence ;
Set your entreatments at a higher rate
Than a command to parley.

*Laer.* Farewell, Ophelia ; remember all that I have said.

*Oph.* It is safely lodged in my memory—it will not slip out.

*Laer.* Farewell. [ *Exit*

*Pol.* What is it, Ophelia, that he has discussed with you ?

*Oph.* If it may please you, it is something about Lord Hamlet.

*Pol.* That reminds me. I have been told that lately he has been spending part of his time with you, and you have made yourself freely accessible to him. If it be so—so it has been hinted to me, and that by way of warning—I must tell you that you do not know where you stand as my daughter whose honour or virtue is concerned should know. What is going on between you and Hamlet ? Tell me the truth.

*Oph.* He has, my lord, lately made pledges of love to me.

*Pol.* Love ! What silly stuff ! You speak like a girl without knowledge and experience ; and you seem to know nothing of the risk you ran. Do not trust his love, or as you call it a *tender* of love.

*Oph.* I do not know, my lord, what should be my way of thinking in this matter.

*Pol.* I am going to instruct you. You may well be an innocent baby when you have accepted his tenders of love for their real value, while they have none. Have more consideration for yourself, or not to overstrain the metaphor of *tender*, you will tender *i. e.*, make me appear a fool.

*Oph.* My lord, he has made love to me in honourable fashion.

*Pol.* Fashion is the word for it, as you put it. It is all silly.

*Oph.* He has supported his words by sacred vows.

*Pol.* They are snares to catch silly birds. I know that when passion is aflame, the soul is lavish of vows and the vows trip off the tongue ; these flames give more light than heat, and go out as soon as they blaze up—and you must not mistake them for the ardent passion of true love. Henceforth, hold yourself aloof, giving him less of your maidenly company. Let your interviews with him be priced higher than a mere demand to talk to you.

For Lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him, that he is young,
And with a larger tether may he walk
Than may be given you : in few, Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows ; for they are brokers,
Not of that dye which their investments show,
But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds,
The better to beguile. This is for all :
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
Have you so slander any moment leisure,
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to 't, I charge you : come your ways.

*Oph.* I shall obey, my lord. [ *Exeunt.*

### SCENE IV. *The Platform*

*Enter* HAMLET, HORATIO, *and* MARCELLUS

*Ham.* The air bites shrewdly : it is very cold.
*Hor.* It is a nipping and an eager air.
*Ham.* What hour now ?
*Hor.* I think it lacks of twelve.
*Mar.* No, it is struck.
*Hor.* Indeed ? I heard it not: it then draws near the season
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

[ *A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off within.*

What does this mean, my lord ?
*Ham.* The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels ;
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.
*Hor.* Is it a custom ?
*Ham.* Ay, marry, is 't :
But to my mind, though I am native here
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honour'd in the breach than the observance.
This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations :
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition ; and indeed it takes
From our achievements though perform'd at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.

As for Hamlet, do not forget that he is young, and credit him with a greater measure of freedom than you can have. In a few words, have no faith in his vows, for they are pledges belying their truth and inciting lascivious passion, while they ring like sacred vows, the better calculated to deceive you. That is all I have to say. To be plain with you, I would not henceforth have you misuse any spare moment of yours in either talking to Lord Hamlet or letting him talk to you. Note that it is a command to you. Come along with me.

*Oph.* I shall obey you, my lord.

SCENE IV. *The Platform*

*Enter* HAMLET, HORATIO, *and* MARCELLUS

*Ham.* The air bits sharp ; it is awfully cold.

*Hor.* It is a pinching and biting air.

*Ham.* What is the time now ?

*Hor.* I tink it is not yet twelve.

*Mar.* No, it has struck twelve.

*Hor.* Is it so ? I did not hear it. The time approaches then when the spirit was accustomed to walk.

[*A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off within* ]

What is the meaning of this, my lord ?

*Ham.* The king keeps awake to-night and indulges in drunken revelry with wild dance. As he gulps the Rhenish wine down, the kettle-drum and trumpet play their part in proclaiming the drunken revelry.

*Hor.* Is it the practice here ?

*Ham.* Yes, it is. But in my opinion, though I was born here and used to the custom, we should do better to violate it than to observe it. The revelry that, fuddles us, makes other nations, east and west, talk ill of us and censure us. They call us drunkards and cast slurs upon us. Indeed, it robs our best achievement of their substantial quality. So it often happens that for some

So, oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As, in their birth,—wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin,—
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit that too much o'er leavens
The form of plausive manners that these men,—
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,—
Their virtues else—be they a pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo—
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault : the dram of eale
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
To his own scandal.

*Enter* Ghost

*Hor.* Look, my lord, it comes !

*Ham.* Angels and ministers of grace defend us !
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou comest in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee : I 'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane :
O, answer me !
Let me not burst in ignorance ; but tell
Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements ; why the sepulchre,
Where we saw thee quietly inurn'd,
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,
To cast thee up again. What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel,
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous ; and we fools of nature
So horridly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls ?
Say, why is this ? wherefore ? what should we do ?

(*Ghost beckons Hamlet*

*Hor.* It beckons you to go away with it,
As if it some impartment did desire
To you alone.

natural defect in some, individuals, for which they are not to blame, since they are born with it, having no choice in the matter—by the predominance of some humour in their disposition to the defeat of reason, or by some habit that alters and modifies plausible manners, they, burdened with one such defect, which they owe to nature or to accident of birth, have little credit for the virtues which they own, no matter how perfect and measureless. The single defect cancels all their virtues in the opinion of mankind. A mere taint corrupts all the virtues and discredits their owner.

*Enter* Ghost

*Hor.* Look, there is the apparition!

*Ham.* May angels and saints protect us! Whether you are a good spirit or one from hell, whether you bring with you airs from heaven or foul vapours from hell, whether your purpose is evil or beneficial, you have a form that I must question you and speak to you. I shall call you Hamlet, King, father, royal Dane. Oh, tell me what you are. Let me not be stiffled in ignorance. Tell me why your bones deposited in the grave with the funeral service, broke through the grave clothes; why the tomb in which we saw you laid in repose, has opened its heavy and marble gates to let you out into the world. What can it mean that you who are dead now in complete armour visit the earth again in moonlight making the night dreadful; we, mortal creatures, are so shaken with fear that we are amazed and perplexed, being faced with an unfathomable enigma as we are. Tell us the reason of all this and what we should do.

[*Ghost beckons Hamlet.*

*Hor.* The ghost summons you and seems to have something to communicate to you alone.

*Mar.* Look, with what courteous action
It waves you to a more removed ground :
But do not go with it.
*Hor.* No, by no means.
*Ham.* It will not speak ; then I will follow it.
*Hor.* Do not, my lord.
*Ham.* Why, what should be the fear ?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee ;
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself ?
It waves me forth again : I 'll follow it
*Hor.* What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form,
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness ? think of it :
The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath.
*Mar.* You shall not go, my lord
*Ham.* Hold off your hands.
*Hor.* Be ruled ; you shall not go.
*Ham.* My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
Still am I call'd : unhand me, gentlemen ;
By heaven, I 'll make a ghost of him that lets me :
I say, away ! Go on ; I 'll follow thee.
[ *Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet.*
*Hor.* He waxes desperate with imagination.
*Mar.* Let 's follow ; 'tis not fit thus to obey him.
*Hor.* Have after. To what issue will this come ?
*Mar.* Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
*Hor.* Heaven will direct it.
*Mar.* Nay, let 's follow him.
[ *Exeunt*

SCENE V. *Another part of the Platform.*
*Enter* Ghost *and* HAMLET.

*Ham.* Wither wilt thou lead me ? speak ; I 'll go no further.
*Ghost.* Mark me.

*Mar.* See, how with a graceful wave of arms the ghost summons you to a remote place. But do not go with the ghost.

*Hor.* By no means are you going.

*Ham.* As the ghost will not otherwise speak, I must follow him.

*Hor.* Do not go after the ghost, please.

*Ham.* There is nothing to fear. I set little value on my life. As for my soul the spirit can do no harm to it, since it is immortal. The spirit sommons me again ; I shall follow him.

*Hor.* Suppose the spirit lures you towards the sea, my lord, or the reeling summit of the rock, overhanging the sea, and then assumes some dreadful shape to drive you beside your wits. You cannot rule out such a possibility. The reeling height of the place will put into you desperate fancies without any cause whatsoever, when you look down into the sea and hear its roar.

*Ham.* The ghost is still calling me. Yes, I am coming.

*Mar.* You should not go, my lord.

*Ham.* Release me.

*Hor.* Listen to us. You should not go.

*Ham.* It is the summons of my fate, and I seem to have at present veins and muscles as strong and tough as those of the Nemean lion. The ghost is still summoning me. Let me go, gentlemen. By god, I will kill him who tries to prevent me. I say, hands off ! I am coming ; you go on. [ *Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet*

*Hor.* He is wrought to a frenzy by his imagination.

*Mar.* Let us go after him. It is not right that we should stay behind and let him go alone.

*Hor.* Go after him. I do not know what it will come to.

*Mar.* There is some evil ripe in the state of Denmark.

*Hor.* Heavenly powers will mend it.

*Mar.* Let us follow him. [ *Exeunt*

SCENE V. *Another part of the Platform.*

*Enter* Ghost *and* HAMLET.

*Ham.* Where are you going to take me ? Speak ; I am not going any further.

*Ghost.* Listen to me.

*Ham.* I will.
*Ghost.* My hour is almost come,
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.
*Ham.* Alas, poor ghost !
*Ghost.* Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.
*Ham.* Speak ; I am bound to hear.
*Ghost.* So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.
*Ham.* What ?
*Ghost.* I am thy father's spirit ;
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine :
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list !
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—
*Ham.* O God !
*Ghost.* Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.
*Ham.* Murder !
*Ghost.* Murder most foul, as in the best it is,
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.
*Ham.* Haste me to know 't, that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.
*Ghost.* I find thee apt ;
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear :
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,
A serpent stung me ; so the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abused : but know, thou noble youth,

*Ham.* I will listen.

*Ghost.* It is almost time when I must return to the hell-fire in which I am being consumed.

*Ham.* I feel for you, unhappy ghost.

*Ghost.* I do not want your pity. Give all your attention to what I am going to reveal to you.

*Ham.* Go on. I must have to hear you.

*Ghost.* So you must have to revenge, when you shall have heard me.

*Ham.* What do you mean ?

*Ghost.* I am your father's spirit. It is my fate that I shall walk abroad at night for a certain period of time, and we consumed in hell-fire all day long till the sins committed in my earthly life are fully paid for. Were it not that I was forbidden to tell you my experience in my place of confinement, I could tell you a narrative, an insignificant detail of which would fill your soul with anguish, make your blood run cold and set your eyes staring wide out of their sockets, separate your close mass of hair and make each hair uprise like the quills upon the touchy porcupine, but this mystery of doomed life after death must reach no human ear. Oh, listen to me if you ever loved your father—

*Ham.* O God !

*Ghost.* You have got to revenge his most vicious and unnatural murder.

*Ham.* Murder !

*Ghost.* Murder in itself is most vicious. But this one tops all murders.

*Ham..* Quickly let me know everything so that I, with the swift movement of meditation or thoughts of love, may pursue my revenge.

*Ghost.* I find you ready to act. If you would not move to action, you should have less sensibility than the slothful weeds that grow on the shores of Lethe. Now, Hamlet, lend you ear. It has been reported that a serpent bit me while I was sleeping in my garden ; so all the people of Denmark were deceived by a

The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

*Ham.* O my prophetic soul !
My uncle !

*Ghost.* Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,—
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce !—won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming virtuous queen ;
O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there !
From me, whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage ; and to decline
Upon a wretch, whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine !
But virtue, as it never will be moved,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed
And prey on garbage.
But, soft ! me thinks I scent the morning air ;
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,
My custom always of the afternoon,
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the porches of my ears did pour
The leperous distilment ; whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man
That swift as quicksilver it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body ;
And with a sudden vigour it doth posset
And curd like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood : so did it mine ;
And a most instant letter bark'd about,
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
All my smooth body.
Thus was I sleeping, by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd :
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneled ;
No reckoning made, but sent to my account

fabricated story of my death. Know, noble youth, the serpent that bit your father to death, now wears his crown.

*Ham.* How my mind was full of presentiments ? My uncle did this !

*Ghost.* That fellow, now guilty of incest and adultery by the extraordinary attraction of his wit and his accomplishments, as a traitor—I curse his wit and accomplishments, which could so easily seduce and secure for satisfaction of his lust my queen who had the semblance of a virtuous woman. O Hamlet, what a degradation was it ! From me, whose love was so noble as to be of accord with the oath I took in marriage, she should swing over to a wretch whom I far excel in natural accomplishment. But virtue will not yield though a lewd person wearing the appearance of an angel tempts it, and so lust, though lodged in an angel, will surfeit itself with heavenly love, and feed on filthy love. But, stay ! I seem to smell the morning air. Let me put it in a few words. While I was sleeping in my garden, as was my custom in the afternoon, your uncle crept to me when I was sleeping, free from care and brought with him the liquid poison of hebenon in a phial and poured into my ears, causing leprosy to break out ; it is so inimical to human blood that it runs swiftly like quicksilver through all the channels of the body and thickens the blood like curdled milk. It had such an effect upon me, and at once a bark-like eruption broke out on my body with an offensive scab, making me look like a leper. Thus, sleeping I was murdered by a brother who robbed me of my crown and queen without being given a chance of expiating my sins—without the administration of the Eucharist and extreme unction, and I was sent to death unprepared, loaded

With all my imperfections on my head :
O, horrible ! O, horrible ! most horrible !
If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not ;
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damned incest.
But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught : leave her to heaven,
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once !
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire :
Adieu, adieu, adieu ! remember me. [*Exit*

*Ham.* O all you host of heaven ! O earth ! what else ?
And shall I couple hell ? O, fie ! Hold, hold, my heart ;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear my stiffly up. Remember thee !
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee !
Yea, from the table of my memory
I 'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there ;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter : yes, by heaven !
O most pernicious woman !
O villain, villain smiling, damned villain !
My tables,—meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain ;
At least I 'm sure it may be so in Denmark. [*Writing*
So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word ;
It is 'Adieu, adieu ! remember me.'
I have sworn 't.

*Hor.*
*Mar.* } [*Within*] My lord, my lord !

*Mar.* [*Within*] Lord Hamlet !
*Hor.* [*Within*] Heaven secure him !
*Ham.* So be it !
*Hor.* [*Within*] Hillo, ho, ho, my lord !
*Ham.* Hillo, ho, ho, boy ! come, bird, come.

with all my sins. Oh, horrible, most horrible! If you have human feeling, do not bear it. Do not let the royal bed of Denmark be defiled by incest and lust. You may get on with your revenge, but do not touch your mother. Let God deal with her and her conscience persecute her. Farewell to you! The glow-worm with its flame diminished shows that the morning is come. Farewell! Remember me.

*Ham.* O all the angels of heaven! O earth! What else shall I invoke? Shall I add hell to it? What a shame! Let not my heart burst and my muscles give way, but support me, if with difficulty. As to remembering you, I will remember you so long as memory functions in my troubled brain. Yes, I will remember you; I will bolt-out from my memory all insignificant, foolish details, all maxims collected from books, all images, all impressions that youthful observation stored in the past—and your command alone shall dwell in the whole space of my memory. Yes, by God, a most harmful woman. And there is the accursed smiling villain. Let me take out my memorandum-book and write in it that one may go smiling, and be a veritable villain. At least I am sure that it may be so in Denmark. [*Writing*

So, uncle, I know what you are. Now to my watchword. It is, 'Adieu, adieu! remember me.' I have taken a vow.

*Hor.* } [*Within*] My lord, my lord!
*Mar.* }

*Mar.* [*Within*] Lord Hamlet!

*Hor.* [*Within*] May heaven guard him!

*Ham.* Let it be so!

*Hor.* Hullo, my lord!

*Ham.* Hullo, boy! come along.

*Enter* HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS

*Mar.* How is 't, my noble lord ?
*Hor.* What news, my lord ?
*Ham.* O, wonderful !
*Hor.* Good my lord, tell it.
*Ham.* No ; you will reveal it.
*Hor.* Not I, my lord, by heaven.
*Mar.* Nor I, my lord.
*Ham.* How say you, then ; would heart of man once think it ?
But you 'll be secret ?
*Hor.*, *Mar.* Ay, by heaven, my lord !
*Ham.* There is ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he 's an errant knave.
*Hor.* There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.
*Ham.* Why, right ; you are i' the right :
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part :
You, as your business and desire shall point you ;
For every man hath business and desire,
Such as it is ; and for mine own poor part,
Look you, I 'll go pray.
*Hor.* These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.
*Ham.* I 'm sorry they offend you, heartily ;
Yes, faith, heartily.
*Hor.* There 's no offence, my lord.
*Ham.* Yes, by Saint Patrickhere is, Horatio,
And much offence too. Touching this vision here,
It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you ;
For your desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster 't as you may. And now, good friends,
As you are friends, scholars and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.
*Hor.* What is 't, my lord ? we will.
*Ham.* Never make known what you have seen to-night.
*Hor.*, *Mar.* My lord, we will not.
*Ham.* Nay, but swear 't
*Hor.* In faith,
My lord, not I.

*Enter* HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

*Mar.* How is it with my lord ?

*Hor.* What news, my lord ?

*Ham.* The news is wonderful.

*Hor.* Let us know it, my lord.

*Ham.* No ; I am afraid that you will tell it to others.

*Hor.* No, my lord, I swear.

*Mar.* Nor I, my lord.

*Ham.* What do you say ? Could it ever enter the mind of man ? But will you keep it a secret ?

*Hor.*
*Mar.* } Yes, by God, my lord.

*Ham.* There is no villain living in Denmark, but he happens to be the topmost villain.

*Hor.* A ghost need not come out of his grave to tell you this.

*Ham.* After all, you are right. And so without any more unnecessary words let us shake hands and take leave ; you may look about for your business, for every man has something to do. As for myself, I shall go and pray.

*Hor.* These words of yours make no meaning.

*Ham.* I am sorry they displease you. I am sorry with all my heart.

*Hor.* I take no offence, my lord.

*Ham.* Yes, by Saint Patrick, there is something wrong with my words, which cannot be overlooked. As regards this spirit, it is an honest ghost ; I can tell you that. If you desire to know what passed between us, you must control your desire as best as you can. Now, good friends, as you are friends, scholars and soldiers, I have one humble request to make to you.

*Hor.* What is it, my lord ? We will keep your request.

*Ham.* Never disclose what you have seen to-night.

*Hor.*
*Mar.* } My lord, we will not.

*Ham.* You must swear it.

*Hor.* My lord, I swear that I will not disclose anything.

*Mar.* Nor I, my lord, in faith.
*Ham.* Upon my sword.
*Mar.* We have sworn, my lord, already.
*Ham.* Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.
*Ghost.* [*Beneath*] Swear.
*Ham.* Ah, ha, boy say'st thou so? art thou there, truepenny?
Come on: you hear this fellow in the cellarage:
Consent to swear.
*Hor.* Propose the oath, my lord.
*Ham.* Never to speak of this that you have seen,
Swear by my sword.
*Ghost.* [*Beneath*] Swear.
*Ham.* Hic et ubique? then we'll shift our ground.
Come hither, gentlemen,
And lay your hands again upon my sword:
Never to speak of this that you have heard,
Swear by my sword.
*Ghost.* [*Beneath*] Swear.
*Ham.* Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?
A worthy pioneer! Once more remove, good friends.
*Hor.* O day and night, but this is wonderous strange!
*Ham.* And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
But come;
Here as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,
As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on,
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
As 'Well, well, we know,' or 'We could, an if we would,'
Or, 'If we list to speak,' or 'There be, an if they might,'
Or such a ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me: this not to do,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you,
Swear.
*Ghost.* [*Beneath*] Swear.

*Mar.* Nor I, my lord.

*Ham.* Swear upon the hilt of my sword.

*Mar.* We have sworn already, my lord.

*Ghost.* [*Beneath*] Swear.

*Ham.* Ah, there you are ! My good fellow, are you there ? Come on ; you hear the ghost speaking from underground. Get ready to swear.

*Hor.* Frame the oath, my lord.

*Ham.* Put your hands on the hilt of my sword and swear that you will never reveal anything of what you have seen tonight.

*Ghost.* [*Beneath*] Swear.

*Ham* Here and everywhere ? Then we shall move from place to place. Come here, gentlemen, and put your hands upon the hilt of the sword—and say that you will never reveal anything of what you have heard to-night. Swear by my sword.

*Ghost.* [*Beneath*] Swear.

*Ham.* Well done, you spirit underground. You can so quickly move about down in the earth ? You are a good miner. Let us move on, good friends.

*Hor.* Swear by day and night. This is most strange !

*Ham.* Therefore, treat it as a thing in which you are not interested. Horatio, the philosophy you have studied, does not give a clue to certain enigmas that the world may present. But come—here swear again as before, so God be merciful to you, however strange or fantastic my conduct might be hereafter, as I might assume a crazy manner, that you should make no comment about it when you happened to meet me, say, either with your arms locked, or with some hand-shake, or by uttering some ambiguous words, as 'Well, well, we know' or 'We could find out, if we wished,' or 'If we care to speak,' or 'There must be something behind it,' or any suspicious hint that you knew anything of me. Swear not to do this, so God's mercy help you in your greatest need.

*Ghost.* [*Beneath*] Swear.

*Ham.* Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! [ *They swear.* ] So, gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you:
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
May do, to express his love and friending to you,
God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together;
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!
Nay, come, let 's go together. [ *Exeunt*

## ACT II.

### Scene I. *A room in Polonius's house.*

*Enter* Polonius *and* Reynaldo.

*Pol.* Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.
*Rey.* I will, my lord.
*Pol.* You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behaviour.
*Rey.* My lord, I did intend it.
*Pol.* Marry, well said, very well said. Look you sir,
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris,
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,
What company, at what expense, and finding
By this encompassment and drift of question
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it:
Take you, as 't were, some distant knowledge of him,
As thus, 'I know his father and his friends,
And in part him:' do you mark this, Reynaldo?
*Rey.* Ay, very well, my lord.
*Pol.* 'And in part him; but,' you may say, 'not well:
But if 't be he I mean, he 's very wild,
Addicted so and so;' and there put on him
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank
As may dishonour him; take heed of that;
But, sir, such wanton, wild and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.
*Rey.* As gaming, my lord.

*Ham.* Do not be impatient, restless spirit ! [*They swear*]. So, gentlemen, all my love goes to you, and what a poor fellow like Hamlet can do to show his love and friendship to you, God permitting, will not be wanting. Let us go in together, and keep mum about it, I pray. Something seems to be grievously wrong, and the worst of luck is that I have got to set right. Come, let us go together. [*Exeunt*

## ACT II.

### SCENE I. A *room in Polonius's house.*

*Enter* POLONIUS *and* REYNALDO.

*Pol.* Give him this money and these letters, Reynaldo.

*Rey.* I shall, my lord.

*Pol.* Before you call on him, you will act very wisely, good Reynaldo, if you make inquiries how he is getting on in Paris.

*Rey.* My lord, I intended it.

*Pol.* That 's right. Let me tell you sir ; first inquire what Danes are in Paris, how they live, who they are, what their means of living is, where they are staying, what company they keep, how much money they spend—find out all this by indirect questions and when you see that they know my son, you come nearer to your object than you could have by putting direct questions. Then pretend that you have a nodding acquaintance with him, saying, 'I know his father and his friends and partly him.' Do you see the point, Reynaldo ?

*Rey.* Yes, very well, my lord.

*Pol.* You should say, 'I know him partly, and not very well.' Then you can add that if it is the person, he lives a dissipated life, being given to such and such vices. And ascribe to him whatever vice you can invent, but nothing so coarse and vile as may traduce him ; be careful of that. You may put upon him vices of dissipation and blemishes that attend youth and licence.

*Rey.* As gambling, my lord.

*Pol.* Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,
Drabbing: you may go so far.

*Rey.* My lord, that would dishonour him.

*Pol.* Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.
You must not put another scandal on him,
That he is open to incontinency;
That 's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so quaintly
That they may seem the taints of liberty,
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,
Of general assault.

*Rey.* But, my good lord,—

*Pol.* Wherefore should you do this?

*Rey.* Ay, my lord,
I would know that.

*Pol.* Marry, sir, here 's my drift,
And I believe it is a fetch of warrant:
You laying these slight sullies on my son,
As 't were a thing a little soil'd i' the working,
Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured
He closes with you in this consequence;
'Good sir,' or so, or 'friend,' or 'gentleman,'
According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country.

*Rey.* Very good, my lord.

*Pol.* And then, sir, does he this—he does—what was I about to say? By the mass I was about to say something: where did I leave?

*Rey.* At 'closes in the consequence,' at 'friend or so,' and 'gentleman.'

*Pol.* At 'closes in the consequence,' ay, marry;
He closes with you thus: 'I know the gentleman;
I saw him yesterday, or t' other day,
Or then, or then; with such, or such; and, as you say,
There was he gaming, there o'ertook in 's rouse,
There falling out a tennis:' or per chance,
'I saw him enter such a house of sale,'
Or so forth.

*Pol.* Yes, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling, going after women ; you need not go beyond that.

*Rey.* My lord, that would be casting slurs upon him.

*Pol.* No indeed ; as you may put it a little more mildly. You should not charge him with immorality ; that would be calumny. I do not mean it. Mention his vices so artfully that they may seem to be the fruit of licence and dissipation the outburst of an impulsive and passionate mind, the indiscipline to which untamed youth is subject

*Rey.* But, my good lord,—

*Pol.* You want to know why you should do this ?

*Rey.* Yes, my lord, I should like to know it.

*Pol.* This is what I mean, and I believe that it is a device which may succeed. You, laying these blemishes on my son as if they were a little overstated—look at me, you should have a measure of the person you are talking to, and find out whether he has seen the young man known to have the vices mentioned, and may make sure, then that he turns to you with such words as 'Good sir', or such, or 'friend', or 'gentleman', as the convention or the way of address may be in that country.

*Rey.* Very good, my lord.

*Pol.* Then, sir, he does this—what was I going to say ? Good gracious ! I was going to say something. Where did I break off ?

*Rey.* At 'turns to you' with words like 'friend or so', and 'gentleman'.

*Pol.* Ah ! There it is. He may go on. 'I know the gentleman, I saw him yesterday, or the other day, or at some other time, with such and such a person ; and, as you say, he was there gambling, or prostrate at a drunken revel, quarrelling as tennis.' Or perhaps 'I saw him enter a brothel', and so on.

See you now ;
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth :
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlasses and with assays of bias,
By indirections find directionst out :
So, by my former lecture and advice,
Shall you my son. You have me, have you not ?

*Rey.* My lord, I have.
*Pol.* God be wi' you ; fare you well.
*Rey.* Good, my lord !
*Pol.* Observe his inclination in yourself.
*Rey.* I shall my lord.
*Pol.* And let him ply his music.
*Rey.* Well, my lord.
*Pol* Farewell ! [*Exit Reynaldo*

*Enter* OPHELIA

How now, Ophelia ! what 's the matter ?
*Oph.* O, my lord, my lord. I have been so affrighted !
*Pol.* With what, i' the name of God ?
*Oph.* My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced ;
No hat upon his head ; his stockings foul'd,
Ungarter'd and down-gyved to his ancle ;
Pale as his shirt ; his knees knocking each other ;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors ;—he comes be fore me.

*Pol.* Mad for thy love ?
*Oph.* My lord, I do not know,
But truly I do fear it.
*Pol.* What said he ?

*Oph.* He took me by the wrist and held me hard ;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
And, with his other hand thus o'ver his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so ;
At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being : that done, he lets me go :

You see the point now. You find out the truth by trying a few lies. Thus we, wise and prudent people, in roundabout ways and by indirect means, find out what we are seeking. So you shall, profiting by my lecture and advice, find out what my son is doing in Paris. You get me now, don't you ?

*Rey.* Yes, my lord, I see what you mean.

*Pol.* Good-bye then.

*Rey.* All right, my lord.

*Pol.* Observe his disposition for yourself.

*Rey.* I shall, my lord.

*Pol.* And let him carry on as he pleases.

*Rey.* That is all right, my lord.

*Pol.* Farewell ! [ *Exit Reynaldo*

*Enter* OPHELIA

What is the matter, Ophelia ?

*Oph.* O my lord, I have been so frightened !

*Pol.* With what may I ask ?

*Oph.* My lord, as I was sewing in my private chamber, Lord Hamlet, with his doublet unbuttoned, hatless ; his stockings, full of filth and hanging loose abcut his ankle ; pale as his shirt ; his knees tottering, and with a look so pathetic as if he had been let out of hell. The horrcr of it was that he came up to me.

*Pol.* Mad for your love ?

*Oph.* My lord, I do not know. But I have taken right of him.

*Pol.* What did he say ?

*Oph.* He caught at my wrist, and held it fast, and then he stepped back all the length of his arm and his other hand placed thus on the brow, he started studying my face as if he would draw it. Long he stayed so At last I shook my arm a little, and shaking he head up and down thrice, he heaved a deep and sad sigh which shook his all being, as if it would end his life. Then

And with his head over his shoulder turn'd,
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;
For out o' doors he went without their helps,
And to the last bended their light on me.

*Pol.* Come, go with me: I will go seek the king.
This is the very ecstasy of love;
Whose violent property fordoes itself
And leads the will to desperate undertakings
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.
What, have you given him any hard words of late?

*Oph.* No, my good lord, but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me.

*Pol.* That hath made him mad.
I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
I had not quoted him: I fear'd he did but trifle
And meant to wreck thee; but beshrew my jealousy!
By heaven, it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion. Come, go we to the king:
This must be known; which being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate utter love.
Come. [ *Exeunt*

## SCENE II. *A room in the Castle.*

*Flourish. Enter* KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN *and* Attendants

*King.* Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so call it,
Sith nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from the understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of: I entreat you both
That being of so young days brought up with him
And sith so neighbour'd to his youth and 'haviour,

he released me, and turning his head over his shoulder, he found his way without sight, for so he went out of doors, and till the last he kept his gaze fixed upon me.

*Pol.* Come with me. I will see the king. This is the very madness of love, which is self-destructive, and leads to desperate actions as often as any earthly passion to which man is subject. I am sorry. Have you lately spoken rudely to him?

*Oph.* No my good lord, but as you ordered me, I rejected his letters and declined to see him.

*Pol.* That has made him mad. I regret that I had not observed him more carefully and sensibly. I was afraid that he was not serious in making love, and wanted to ruin you. My suspicion is to blame. It happens that in old age we are apt to overreach ourselves, trying to be wise, whereas the younger people are rash. Come, let us go to the king. This must be communicated to the king. If it were kept back, it might cause more sorrow later than the king's anger by disclosing it now.

SCENE II. *A room in the Castle.*

*Flourish. Enter* KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and* Attendants.

*King.* Dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern you are welcome. We sent for you so hastily because apart from our longing to see you, we have a need to use you. You have heard something of the change in Hamlet; we must describe it so since Hamlet is neither inwardly nor outwardly what he was. I cannot make out what could have so changed him as to be out of his wits except his father's death. I request you both, since you have been brought up with him in your youth, and are of similar age and disposition,

That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court
Some little time : so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather
So much as from occasion you may glean,
Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus,
That open'd lies within our remedy.
*Queen.* Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you,
And sure I am two men there are not living
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
To show us so much gentry and good will
As to expend your time with us a while
For the supply and profit of our hope,
Your visitation shall receive thanks
As fits a king's remembrance.
*Ros.* Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more not command
Than to entreaty.
*Guil.* But we both obey,
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent
To lay our service at your feet,
To be commanded.
*King.* Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.
*Queen.* Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz :
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changed son, Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.
*Guil.* Heavens make our presence and our practices
Pleasant and helpful to him !
*Queen.* Ay, amen !
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and some Attendants.*]
*Enter* POLONIUS.
*Pol.* The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully return'd.
*King.* Thou still hast been the father of good news.
*Pol.* Have I, my lord ? Assure you my good liege,
I hold my duty as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious king :
And I do think, or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
As it hath used to do, that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

that you are pleased to spend some time in our court, and so by your companionship attract him to pleasures, and gather as you have a chance or opportunity, whether anything that we know not of, distresses his mind, but being revealed, can be put an end to.

*Queen.* Good gentlemen, he has talked much of you, and I do not know of two living men of whom he is more fond. If you are pleased to be so good and kind as to spend your time a little with us so that you fulfil our hope, your visit will receive thanks as a king can offer.

*Ros.* Both your majesties might substitute your entreaty by command when it is your pleasure to use our services since you have supreme power over us.

*Guil.* We both obey you and willingly place ourselves at your disposal.

*King.* Thanks Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

*Queen.* Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz, and I pray you to visit immediately my son changed beyond recognition. Go, some of you and take them to Hamlet.

*Guil.* May God make our association and what we may do for him yield pleasure to him and bring him round.

*Queen.* I wish the same.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern; and some Attendants.*]

*Enter* Polonius.

*Pol.* The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord, have returned with good news.

*King.* You have always brought me good news.

*Pol.* Is that so, my lord ? Let me assure you, my good lord, as I hold my soul responsible to God, so my duty to my gracious king is equally serious with me. I am of opinion, or my brain does not track state policy as unerringly as it used to do, that I have got at the cause of Hamlet's madness.

*King.* O, speak of that; that do I long to hear.
*Pol.* Give first admittance to the ambassadors;
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.
*King.* Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.
[ *Exit Polonius*
He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.
*Queen.* I doubt it is no other but the main;
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage.
*King.* Well, we shall sift him.

*Re-enter* POLONIUS, *with* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

Welcome, my good friends!
Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?
*Volt.* Most fair return of greetings and desires.
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies, which to him appear'd
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack,
But better look'd into, he truly found
It was against your highness: whereat grieved,
That so his sickness, age and impotence
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys,
Receives rebuke from Norway and in fine
Makes vow before his uncle never more
To give the assay of arms against your majesty.
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee,
And his commission to employ those soldiers,
So levied as before, against the Polack:
With an entreaty, herein further shown, [*Giving a paper*
That it might please you to give quiet pass
Through your dominions for this enterprise,
On such regards of safety and allowance
As therein are set down.
*King.* It likes us well,
And at our more consider'd time we'll read,
Answer, and think upon this business.
Meantime we thank you for your well-took labour:
Go to your rest; at night we'll feast together:
Most welcome home!
[*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius*

*King.* Out with it at once. Nothing I am more eager to hear.

*Pol.* First give audience to the ambassadors. My news shall be the dessert to the great feast.

*King.* You can do personal honour to them by bringing them in.

[*Exit Polonius*

He tells me, my dear Gertrude, that he has discovered the main cause of your son's malady.

*Queen.* I doubt if it can be anything else than his father's death and our marriage immediately following it.

*King.* We shall probe him.

*Re-enter* POLONIUS *with* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

Welcome, my good friends. Tell us, Voltimand, what news you bring from the King of Norway.

*Volt.* Fair greetings and good wishes. As we first put the matter before him, he sent out his men to stop his nephew's recruiting, which was made to appear to him as a preparation, against the Poles; but when he went into the matter thoroughly, he found that the preparation was against your majesty. He was very unhappy that his sickness, old age and powerlessness had been so abused, and had Fortinbras arrested. Fortinbras submitted; was reprimanded by the King of Norway, and finally took a solemn oath that he would never attempt hostilities against your majesty. The old King of Norway overwhelmed with joy, settled upon him an annual sum of three thousand crowns and gave him authority to use the soldiers recruited against the Poles. And he requests you, as it is stated here, that you might be pleased to give Fortinbras free passage through your kingdom for this expedition on such terms as might be safely granted

*King.* It pleases us well. When we can give more consideration to it, we shall read the document and answer it in due time. In the meantime, we thank for the services so well done. Rest now; we shall feast together to-night. You are heartily welcome home. [*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius*

*Pol.* This business is well ended.
My liege, and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day and time,
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,
What is 't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

*Queen.* More matter, with less art.

*Pol.* Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true, 'tis pity.
And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure;
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him then: and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause:
Thus it remains and the remainder thus.
Perpend.
I have a daughter, have while she is mine,—
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this: now gather and surmise. [*Reads*
'To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,'
That 's an ill phrase, a vile phrase: 'beautified' is a vile phrase; but you shall here. Thus: [*Reads*
'In her excellent white bosom, these,' etc

*Queen.* Came this from Hamlet to her?

*Pol.* Good madam, stay a while; I will be faithful. [*Reads*

'Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.

'O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to recken my groans: but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.

'Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, HAMLET.'

*Pol.* There is a happy ending to this business. My lord, and madam, to discuss what a King is, what duty is, why there is a difference between day and night, would be but a waste of time. Therefore, since brevity is the essential mark of understanding and long drawn details of statement are but its inferior stuff, I must be brief. Your noble son is mad. I cannot call it anything but madness. To analyse madness—what can it be but madness? So I waive it.

*Queen.* Please give us more of substance than any trick of yours.

*Pol.* Madam, I swear, I use no trick of expression at all. There is no gainsaying that he is mad, and it is a pity that it is so. It may be a silly turn of expression. Good-bye to it ; I will use no trick of expression. Let us assume then that he is mad. And now what remains to be done is to find out the cause of this effect (*i. e.*, madness), or rather the cause of this defect for there must be a cause for this effect, showing indeficiency of understanding. Thus, the matter stands. Consider it. I have a daughter – I can claim her as my daughter so long as she is mine —who, let it be noted, out of her sense of duty and obedience, has given me this letter ; now attend and make you your guess. [ *Reads*

"To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia"—It is an excreble phrase ; "beautified" is the worst word. But you shall hear. Thus it goes : [ *Reads*

"In her excellent white bosom, these," etc.

*Queen.* Did Hamlet write this letter ?

*Pol.* Good madam, have patience. I shall do my duty faithfully. "You may doubt that the stars are fire, that the sun moves, that truth is a lie, but do not doubt my love. O dear Ophelia, I am bad at writing verses. I do not know the art of registering, my groans in verse. But pray believe me when I say that I love you most. Farewell. Yours ever more, most dear lady, as long as he has life, Hamlet."

This in obedience hath my daughter shown me;
And more above, hath his solicitings
As they fell out by time, by means and place,
All given to mine ear.

*King.* But how hath she
Received his love?

*Pol.* What do you think of me?

*King.* As of man faithful and honourable.

*Pol.* I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing,—
As I perceived it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me,—what might you,
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,
If I had play'd the desk or table book,
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb,
Or look'd upon his love with idle sight;
What might you think? No, I went round to work,
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:
'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star;
This must not be:' and then I prescripts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;
And he repulsed, a short tale to make,
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and by this declension
Into the madness wherein now he raves,
And all we mourn for.

*King.* Do you think this?

*Queen.* It may be, very like.

*Pol.* Hath there been such a time, I 'ld fain know that,
That I have positively said, ''Tis so,'
When it proved otherwise?

*King.* Not that I know.

*Pol.* [*Pointing to his hand and shoulder*] Take this from this, if this be otherwise:
If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

*King.* How may we try it further?

My daughter has but done her duty by showing me this, and moreover told me of his wooing as it progressed in course of time by what means and at what places.

*King.* How has she taken his love ?

*Pol.* What is your opinion of me ?

*King.* As of a man loyal to me and with a sense of honour.

*Pol.* I should like to prove that it is so. When I saw this impulsive and passionate love in full swing which I noticed before my daughter had told me of it, what might your majesty and your queen think if I had acted as a go-between, or as a silent witness or taken no notice of it. What might you think ? No, I took it seriously, and spoke to my daughter, "Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of your sphere. This must stop—" And then I cautioned her that she should keep herself away from Hamlet, receive no message from him, nor any gifts. She followed my advice, and Hamlet was a rejected lover. To cut short the story, Hamlet first declined melancholy, then denied himself food and sleep ; he began to grow weak and light-headed and by such steps he developed a raving madness, which is the cause of so much sorrow to us.

*King.* Is that your view ?

*Queen.* Very likely, it is the fact.

*Pol.* Let me ask whether it has ever occurred when I firmly said, "It is so" and had proved the contrary.

*King.* I am not aware of it.

*Pol.* [*Pointing to his head and shoulder*] You may cut off my head from my shoulder, if it prove otherwise. If things do not take an adverse turn, I will find the truth, wherever it is hidden, though it were hidden in the centre of the earth.

*King.* How may we test it further ?

*Pol.* You know, sometimes he walks four hours together.
Here in the lobby.
*Queen.* So he does, indeed.
*Pol.* At such a time I 'll loose my daughter to him :
Be you and I behind an arras then ;
Mark the encounter ; if he love her not,
And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,
Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm and carters.
*King.* We will try it.
*Queen.* But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.
*Pol.* Away, I do beseech you, both away :
I 'll board him presently.

[ *Exeunt King, Queen and Attendants.*

*Enter* HAMLET, *reading*

O give me leave : how does my good Lord Hamlet ?
*Ham.* Well, God a mercy.
*Pol.* Do you know me, my lord ?
*Ham.* Excellent well ; you are a fishmonger.
*Pol.* Not I, my lord !
*Ham.* Then I would you were so honest a man.
*Pol.* Honest, my lord !
*Ham.* Ay, sir ; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.
*Pol.* That 's very true, my lord.
*Ham.* For if the son breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion—Have you a daughter ?
*Pol.* I have, my lord.
*Ham.* Let her not walk i' the sun : conception is a blessing ; but not as your daughter may conceive,—friend, look to 't.
*Pol.* [*Aside*]. How say you by that ? Still harping on my daughter ; yet he knew me not at first ; he said I was a fishmonger : he is far gone : and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love ; very near this. I 'll speak to him again. What do you read, my lord ?
*Ham.* Words, words, words.
*Pol.* What is the matter, my lord ?
*Ham.* Between who ?
*Pol.* I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

*Pol.* You know that sometimes he walks four hours together here in the lobby.

*Queen.* Yes, he does that.

*Pol.* At such a time, I shall let loose my daughter to him. Let you and myself lurk behind the curtain. We can watch their meeting. If he does not love her, and if his loss of reason does not spring from it let me no more be a chamberlain, but do farming.

*King.* We shall put it to the test.

*Queen.* But look where the miserable young man comes reading.

*Pol.* Both of you should get out of the way. I shall accost him at once. [ *Exeunt King, Queen, and Attendants*

*Enter* HAMLET, *reading*

May it please you if I ask how you are, my good lord Hamlet ?

*Hamlet.* I am well, thank God.

*Pol.* Do you know me, my lord ?

*Ham.* Quite well ; you are a fish-seller.

*Pol.* No, not I, my lord.

*Ham.* Then I wish that you were as honest as a fisherman.

*Pol.* Honest you mean, my lord ?

*Ham.* Yes, sir, honesty is very rare in the world at present ; you can pick one honest man out of ten thousand.

*Pol.* It is indeed true, my lord.

*Ham.* If the sun breeds worms in a dead dog, being good enough to be touched by the sun—Have you a daughter ?

*Pol.* I have, my lord.

*Ham.* Let her not go out in the sun. You know what the sun does. Conception may be all right, but not in the case of your daughter. Mind that friend.

*Pol.* [*Aside*]. What do you mean by that? He has my daugh-rer always in his mind. Yet he could not recognize me at first ; he said that I was a fisherman. He is very much afflicted, as I see. In my youth, I suffered great agony of love, not unlike what he suffers now. I will speak to him again. What are you reading, my lord ?

*Ham.* It is nothing but words.

*Pol.* What is the matter (subject-matter), my lord ?

*Ham.* Matter between whom ?

*Pol.* I mean the subject—you are reading.

*Ham.* Slanders, sir : for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams : all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down ; for yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

*Pol.* [*Aside*] Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.—Will you walk out of the air, my lord ?

*Ham.* Into my grave.

*Pol.* Indeed, that 's out of the air. [*Aside*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are ! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.—My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

*Ham.* You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal : except my life, except my life, except my life.

*Pol.* Fare you well, my lord.

*Ham.* These tedious old fools !

*Re-enter* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

*Pol.* You go to seek the Lord Hamlet ; there he is.
*Ros.* [*To Polonius*] God save you, sir ! [*Exit Polonius.*
*Guil.* My honoured lord !
*Ros.* My most dear lord !

*Ham.* My excellent good friends ! How dost thou, Guildenstern ? Ah, Rosencrantz ! Good lads, how do you both ?

*Ros.* As the indifferent children of the earth.
*Guil.* Happy, in that we are not over-happy ;
On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.
*Ham.* Nor the soles of her shoe ?
*Ros.* Neither, my lord.
*Ham.* Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours ? What 's the news ?
*Ros.* None, my lord, but that the world 's grown honest.

*Ham.* I am reading slanders, sir. The satirist who seems to be a rogue says that old men have grey beards, wrinkled faces, eyes full of clotted rheum and a total lack of intelligence as well as the weakest loins. These might be all true but it would not be fair to set them in writing. You should be as old as myself if you could make your way back like a crab.

*Pol.* [*Aside*] Though it is madness, there is some trick in it. Will you walk out of the air, my lord ?

*Ham.* Do you mean, into my grave ?

*Pol.* That would indeed be out of the air. [ *Aside* ] His replies are sometimes charged with meaning. It is a lucky hit that madness makes, and it is sometimes beyond the reach of teason and sanity. I shall leave him and then manage to get him and my daughter together. My good lord, most humbly I take leave of you.

*Ham.* You can take from me nothing that I shall most willingly give away—my life excepted.

*Pol.* Farewell, my lord.

*Ham.* I cannot stand these old tedious fools.

*Re-enter* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

*Poil* You are seeking Lord Hamlet. He is there.

*Ros.* [*To Polonius*] Good-bye, sir. [*Exit Polonius.*

*Guil.* My honoured lord !

*Ros.* My most dear lord !

*Ham.* My very excellent friends ! How are you Guildenstern ? Here is Rosencrantz ! How are you getting on, good friends of mine !

*Ros.* We are such as the world takes little notice of—we are the unfavoured children of the earth.

*Guil.* We are happy just because we have not too much of happiness. We are not certainly 'down and out'.

*Ham.* You are not down under the feet of fortune.

*Ros.* That 's true, my lord.

*Ham.* Then you are up, say, midway in fortune's favour. What 's the news ?

*Ros.* There is no news except that the world has grown honest.

*Ham.* Then is doomsday near : but your news is not true. Let me question more in particular : what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither ?

*Guil.* Prison, my lord !

*Ham.* Denmark 's a prison.

*Ros.* Then is the world one.

*Ham.* A goodly one ; in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

*Ros.* We think not so, my lord.

*Ham.* Why then 'tis none to you ; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so : to me it is a prison.

*Ros.* Why, then your ambition makes it one ; 'tis too narrow for your mind.

*Ham.* O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have had dreams.

*Guil.* Which dreams indeed are ambition : for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

*Ham.* A dream itself is but a shadow.

*Ros.* Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

*Ham.* Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court ? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

*Ros.*
*Guil.* } We 'll wait upon you.

*Ham.* No such matter : I will not sort you with the rest of my servants ; for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore ?

*Ros.* To visit you, my lord : no other occasion.

*Ham.* Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks ; but I thank you : and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a half penny. Were you not sent for ? Is it your own inclining ? Is it a free visitation ? Come, deal justly with me : come, come ; nay, speak.

*Guil.* What should we say, my lord ?

*Ham.* Then the Judgment-Day is coming. But I cannot take your news to be true. Let me put searching questions to you. How could you have merited the favour of fortune to send you to Denmark, nothing but a prison ?

*Guil.* You say prison, my lord ?

*Ham.* Denmark is a prison.

*Ros.* Then the world is also a prison.

*Ham.* The world is a fairly big prison with many places of confinement, Denmark being one of the worst.

*Ros.* We think otherwise, my lord.

*Ham.* Then it is no prison to you. There is nothing either good or bad, but what you think to be so. As for myself, Denmark is a prison.

*Ros.* You think it a prison because your ambition is too high. Denmark is too small to satisfy your ambition.

*Ham.* What a thing to say ? Put me inside a nutshell, and I shall be content to think that I am lord of infinite space, but lately some bad dreams visited me.

*Guil.* These dreams mean ambition. What the ambitious strive for is no reality, but the shadow of a dream.

*Ham.* Why, a dream is but a shadow.

*Ros.* I reckon ambition so unreal and illusory that I may say it is a shadow's shadow.

*Ham.* If ambition is no more than a shadow's shadow, then we must describe beggars as bodies and kings and puffed up heroes as the shadows of beggars. Shall we go to the court ? I can argue no more.

*Ros.*
*Guil.* } We shall be your attendants.

*Ham.* Nothing of the kind, please. I shall not class you with my servants. To be honest with you, I am attended by dreaded companions. But as a friend may ask of another friend : What are you doing here at Elsinore ?

*Ros.* We have come to pay a visit to you. There is no other reason.

*Ham.* I am but a beggar ; I cannot even thank you as I should. However, I thank you, though it is not worth much. Were you not sent for ? Did you come of your own free will ? Is it a visit that you chose on your own ? Tell me the truth. Come on, say.

*Guil.* What should we say, my lord ?

*Ham.* Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties nave not craft encugh to colour: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

*Ros.* To what end, my lord?

*Ham.* That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no.

*Ros* [*Aside to Guil.*] What say you?

*Ham.* [*Aside*] Nay then, I have an eye of you.—If you love me, hold not off.

*Guil.* My lord, we were sent for.

*Ham.* I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather. I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

*Ros.* My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

*Ham.* Why did you laugh then, when I said 'man delights not me'?

*Ros.* To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted them on the way: and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

*Ham.* He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty shall have tribute of me;

*Ham.* You can say anything, but it must be relative to my question. You were sent for ; your looks betray you—you have not yet learnt the art to dissemble. I know that the good king and queen have sent for you.

*Ros.* What could be the purpose, my lord ?

*Ham.* That you must tell me. Let me beseech you, as a friend may demand of another, as we are more or less of the same age, as we have ever been good friends, and by what more potent reasons I can urge, tell me frankly whether you were not sent for.

*Ros.* [*Aside to Guil.*] What do you say ?

*Ham.* [*Aside*] I am keeping a sharp eye on you. If you love me, do not withhold the truth.

*Guil.* My lord, we were sent for.

*Ham.* Let me tell you why ; so I am beforehand with you and you have nothing to reveal, and you do not give away the king. I have lately—but I can tell you of no reason—lost all my merriment, renounced my customary exercises, and indeed it has so weighed upon my spirits that this fair structure, the earth, seems to be barrenness itself, this splendid vault above me the air, this sky, hanging over, this glorious roof, studded with golden stars - all this seems to be nothing else than an accumulation of foul vapours. What a masterpiece is a man ! how glorified by the girt of reason ! what boundless capacities ! how well-made and impressive in shape and movement ! how like an angel in action ! how like a god in understanding ! He is the image of beauty ! he is unique among animals ! But what is he after all ? A fine particle of dust ! Man delights me not, nor woman either, though your smile seems to say so.

*Ros.* We did not have such a notion in our mind.

*Ham.* Why did you then laugh when I said 'man delights me not.'

*Ros.* On thinking, my lord, if you take no delight in man, you would give but a poor reception to the players. We encountered them on the way. They are coming here to offer their services.

*Ham.* He who plays the king, cannot go without my welcome ; my respect goes to him ;

the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickle o' the sere, and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for 't. What players are they?

*Ros.* Even those you were wont to tak such delight in the tragedians of the city.

*Ham.* How chances it they travel? their residence, both in, reputation and profit was better both ways.

*Ros.* I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

*Ham.* Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? are they so followed?

*Ros.* No, indeed, are they not.

*Ham.* How comes it? do they grow rusty?

*Ros.* Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace: but there is, sir, an eyrie of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question and are most tyrannically clapped for 't: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come—so they call them—that thither.

*Ham.* What are they children? who maintains 'em? how are they escorted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players,—as it is most like, if their means are no better, their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession?

*Ros.* Faith, there has been much to do on both sides, and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy: there was for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

*Ham.* Is 't possible?

*Guil.* O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

*Ham.* Do the boys carry it away?

*Ros.* Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too.

*Ham.* It is not very strange; for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats a-piece, for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[*Flourish of trumpets within*

the Knight out for adventures must fight with his sword ; the lover who sighs shall not do so in vain ; the fantastic character must not carry his quarrelling habit too far ; the clown must exercise his function to the satisfaction of those who are apt to laugh, and the lady must have full scope, and her speech in resounding verse must not be cut short. What players are they ?

*Ros.* Those players in whom you used to take delight—the tragedians of the city.

*Ham.* How is it that they are touring ? They were well established locally and high in reputation and emoluments.

*Ros.* I think they have been ousted because of the rising by the growing fame of a new party—and changing fashion.

*Ham.* Do they not retain the same reputation and popularity as they did in the city ?

*Ros.* No, indeed.

*Ham.* How does it happen ? Are they growing stale ?

*Ros.* They do their best as before but there is a group of boy-players who declaim in shrill cries, and they seem to enjoy tremendous popularity. And gallants are afraid to visit public theatres because they have been discredited by the champions of boy-players.

*Ham.* You say, they are boy-players. How are they paid and maintained ? What about pursuing their profession when they have lost their boyish voice ? One day they would become common players, which is most likely, when they had lost their patrons, would they not complain that the "goose-quills" were no friends of theirs in decrying the common players ?

*Ros.* The common players and boy-players are both at fault and they are being incited to attack each other. For the time being, the theatrical managers would accept no play unless it contained references to the dispute.

*Ham.* Is that so ?

*Guil.* So many intellects have been drawn into this dispute.

*Ham.* Is it that the boy-players score ?

*Ros.* So it seems, my lord. They, in fact, swamp the public theatre

*Hom.* Nothing strange about it when my uncle is King of Denmark, and those who used to make grimaces at him when my father lived, pay any amount for his picture in miniature. There must be something deeper in it than we can discover.

[*Flourish of trumpets within.*

*Guil.* There are the players.

*Ham.* Gentlemen. You are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come then: the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony: let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players, which, I tell you, must show fairly outwards, should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

*Guil.* In what, my dear lord?

*Ham.* I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

*Re-enter* Polonius.

*Pol.* Well be with you, gentlemen!

*Ham.* Hark you, Guildenstern; and you too: at each ear a hearer; that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

*Ros.* Happily he 's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

*Ham.* I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it. You say right, sir: o' Monday morning; 't was so, indeed.

*Pol.* My lord, I have news to tell you.

*Ham.* My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome,—

*Pol.* The actors are come hither, my lord.

*Ham.* Buz, buz!

*Pol.* Upon my honour,—

*Ham.* Then came each actor on his ass,—

*Pol.* The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

*Ham.* O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

*Pol.* What a treasure had he, my lord?

*Ham.* Why,

'One fair daughter, and no more,
The which he loved passing well.'

*Guil.* The players have arrived.

*Ham.* Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Let me clasp your hands; ceremony is part of welcome; let me observe it by shaking your hands, and I am afraid the attention I pay to the players seems in striking contrast to the entertainment you received from me. You (*addressing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*) are all the same welcome; but you should know that my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deluded about me.

*Guil.* How, my dear lord?

*Ham.* The north-west wind only affects me, but otherwise I am sane. A southerly wind blowing, I can make out a hawk from a handsaw.

*Re-enter* POLONIUS.

*Pol.* You are welcome, gentlemen.

*Ham.* Listen, Guildenstern at one ear, and you at the other. That great baby you see has not yet grown out of his babyhood.

*Ros.* Perhaps, it is now his second childhood, for it is said that an old man returns to childhood.

*Ham.* I predict that he comes to tell us of the players. You are right, sir; on Monday morning it was so.

*Pol.* My lord, I have news to tell you.

*Ham.* My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome—

*Pol.* The actors have come, my lord.

*Ham.* Keep it to yourself!

*Pol.* Upon my honour—

*Ham.* Then each actor must have come, mounted on his ass.

*Pol.* They are the best actors, whether they come in for tragedy, or for comedy, or for a historical play, or for a pastoral, for any other variety—pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, or a play in which all the elements are combined. They are good for a play in which the unity of place is observed or in which the unities of time and place are thrown overboard. They can act in a tragedy of Seneca, or in a comedy of Plautus. Either for the classical or the romantic play they come very handy.

*Ham.* O Jephthah, Judge of Israel, what a treasure did you have?

*Pol.* What treasure did he have, my lord?

*Ham.* Why, he had one fair daughter, whom he loved very much.

*Pol.* [*Aside*] Still on my daughter.

*Ham.* Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah ?

*Pol.* If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter I love passing well.

*Ham.* Nay, that follows not.

*Pol.* What follows, then, my lord ?

*Ham.* Why,

'As by lot, God wot,'

and then you know,

'It came to pass, as most like it was,'—

the first row of the pious chanson will show you more ; for look, where my abridgement comes.

*Enter four or five* Players.

You are welcome, masters ; welcome all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. O my old friend ! Why thy face is valanced since I saw thee last ; comest thou to beard me in Denmark ? What, my young lady and mistress ! By 'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring. Masters you are all welcome. We 'll e'en to 't like French falconers, fly and any thing we see : we 'll have a speech straight : come, give us a taste of your quality ; come, a passionate speech.

*First Play.* What speech, my good lord ?

*Ham.* I heard thee speak me a speech once ; but it was never acted ; or, if it was, not above once ; for the play, I remember pleased not the million ; 't was caviare to the general : but it was—as I received it, and others, whose judgment in such matters cried in the top of mine—an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember, one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affection ; but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it I chiefly loved : 't was Æneas' tale to Dido ; and thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of Praim's slaughter : if it live in your memory, begin at this line; let me see ; let me see ;
'The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast.'
It is not so : it begins with 'Pyrrhus.'

*Pol.* [*Aside*] He cannot think of anything else than my daughter.

*Ham.* Am I not correct, old Jephtah ?

*Pol.* If you say that I am Jephtah, my lord, then I have a daughter, whom I love very much.

*Ham.* I do not mean that, however.

*Pol.* What do you mean, my lord ?

*Ham.* Why, as God knows, the next line that follows : 'it came to pass, as most likely it was'—it is to be found in the first few verses of the pious song. There, I must stop now, what I was telling you.

*Enter four or five* Players

You are welcome, gentlemen. I am glad to see you well. Welcome, good friends. O my old friend, you have grown a beard since I saw you last. So you greet me with a beard in Denmark. O my young lady and mistress ! By our lady (the Virgin Mary), you are taller by wearing high-soled shoes than when I saw you last. Would to God that your voice were not broken like a coin that is no longer current. Gentlemen, you are welcome. Like French falconers who set the hawk on any bird, let us have a speech straightway ; let us have a sample of your acting. Come, let it be something stirring.

*First Play.* What speech would you prefer, my lord ?

*Ham.* I heard you get on with a speech once, but it was not acted on the stage more than once, if I remember. The play did not seem to please the multitude ; it went unappreciated. But it was—as I thought, and in the opinion of others who had better judgment than myself a very good play, divided well into scenes, and composed with a skill and moderation. I remember one remarking that it had no smeethy witticisms to season it, nor any thought to accuse the author of affectation, but it was a play, written in all excellence of taste and without any touch of artificiality. I admired one speech in it particularly, it was the speech of Aeneas to Dido, where he tells the story of Priam's slaughter. If you have not forgotten it, start at the line—let me quote it :

The rugged Pyrrhus, like the 'Hyrcanian beast'—

That 's not right ; it begins with 'Pyrrhus.'

'The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse.'
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd
With hearldry more dismal : head to foot
Now is he total gules ; horridly trick'd
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
Baked and impasted with the parching streets
That lend a tyrannous and a damned light
To their lord's murder : roasted in wrath and fire,
And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish, Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks.'
So proceed you

*Pol.* 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

*First Play.* 'Anon he finds him
Striking too short at Greeks : his antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command : unequal match'd
Pyrrhus at Priam drives ; in rage strikes wide ;
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword,
The unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear : for, lo ! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' the air to stick ;
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood.
And like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.
But as we often see against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region.
So after Pyrrhus' pause
Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work ;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour, forged for proof eterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam
Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune ! All you go
In general synod take away her power,
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven
As low as to the fiends !

*Pol.* This is too long.

*Ham.* It shall to the barber's, with your beard.
Prithee, say on : he 's for jig or a tale, or he sleeps : say on : come to Hecuba,

"The fierce-looking Pyrrhus, who wore black armour resembling the night with a purpose as dark, when he was hidden in the sinister wooden-horse, has now painted himself a colour more frightful than his original dark and dreaded complexion. Head to foot he is now painted with blood—decked out with the blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons—the streets, encrusted with flakes of blood in the heat of the sun, lending a fantastic and oppressive light to the scene of the murder of their lord. Inflamed with anger, caked over with blood, with fiery-red eyes, the wicked Pyrrhus seeks the old grandfather Priam". Yon can go on now.

*Pol.* By God ! you have my lord, well delivered the speech in a good and modulated tone.

*First Play.* Soon he finds him, hardly able to strike at the Greeks, his old-fashioned sword refusing to obey him ! Though Priam is not strong enough to be his equal Pyrrhus attacks him, and in anger brandishes his sword, and the breath of wind raised by it, blows down the weak and feeble Priam. Then, Troy, though without any capacity of feeling, seems to be affected by this blow, and crashes down in flames, stupefying Pyrrhus with the noise. Behold, his sword, in the act of coming down on the grey head of reverend Priam, remains suspended in the air. So Pyrrhus stood there like a tyrant painted on a tapestry, and could not carry out his will and purpose. But as it often happens, when a storm is brewing, there is a hush of silence, a mass of clouds accumulates in the sky, the boisterous winds are mute and the earth below has a death-like silence, and soon the thunderstorm breaks, so after a lull reawkened vengeance puts Pyrrhus into action. The hammers of the Cyclops did not fall on Mars's armour, proof against all attack as it was, with less pity than Pyrrhus's blood-stained sword now falls on Priam's head. Denounce Fortune who acted like a faithless woman. Let all the gods meet and deprive Fortune of her power, break down the wheel which she keeps turning and hurl it into hell.

*Pol.* It is too long.

*Ham.* Like your beard, let it be sent to the barber. Please, go on. He can understand a comic song or tale, or he will sleep through a good speech. Go on ; now speak of Hecuba.

*First Play.* 'But who, O, who had seen the mobled queen—'
*Ham.* 'The mobled queen ?'
*Pol.* That 's good, 'mobled queen' is good.
*First Play.* 'Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames
With bisson rheum ; a clout upon that head
Where late the diadem stood ; and for a robe,
About her lank and all o'er-teemed loins,
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up :
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd
'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounced :
But if the gods themselves did see her then,
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
The instant burst of clamour that she made,
Unless things mortal move them not at all,
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven
And passion in the gods.'

*Pol.* Lok whether he has not turned his colour and has tears in 's eyes. Prithee no more.

*Ham.* 'Tis well I 'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon. Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed ? Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time : after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

*Pol.* My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

*Ham.* God's bodykins, man, much better : use every man after his desert, and who shall 'scape whipping ? Use them after your own honour and dignity ; the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in

*Pol.* Come, sirs.

*Ham.* Follow him, friends : we 'll hear a play to-morrow [*Exit Polonius with all the Players but the First*]. Dost thou hear me, old friend : can you play the Murder of Gonzago ?

*First Play.* Ay, my lord.

*Ham.* We 'll ha 't to-morrow night. You could for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in 't, could you not ?

*Firstl Play* Ay, my lord.

*Ham.* Very well. Follow that lord ; and look you mock him not. [*Exit First Player.*] My good friends, I'll leave you till night : you are welcome to Elsinore.

*First Play.* 'But, Oh ! who had seen the muffled queen.'

*Ham.* Yes, that 's it—'the muffled queen—'

*Pol.* I like it 'muffled queen.'

*First Play.* 'Run barefoot up and down, blinded with tears and heedless of the flames, a rag upon her head in place of the crown that she lately wore and a blanket instead of a robe folded across her shrunk and exhausted (by child-bearing) loins—a blanket which she happened to pick up in a hurry and fright. Whoever had seen this, would have cried out against the power of Fortune. When she saw Pyrrhus, in a spiteful game, cutting to pieces her husband's limbs, she raised a loud clamour, and unless human sorrows leave the gods alone, if they had witnessed the scene, they would have been deeply moved, and the stars of heaven would have shed tears.'

*Pol.* Look, he has been deeply affected, all colour drained away from his face and tears in his eyes. No more, please.

*Ham.* It is good. I will have you recite the rest of the speech soon. My good lord, will you please see the players decently lodged. See to it that they are well treated, for they are the chroniclers of the age. A bad inscription upon your tomb after you die is to be preferred to their dispraise of you while you are alive.

*Pol.* My lord, I shall treat them as they deserve.

*Ham.* By God, treat them much better than they deserve. If everybody is treated no better than he deserves then none can escape whipping. Treat them as your own good name and position demand. The less they deserve, the greater the merit for you. Take them to their lodgings.

*Pol.* Come, sirs.

*Ham.* Go with him, friends. To-morrow we shall have a play performed. [*Exit Polonius with all the Players but the First.*] Can you, my old friend, play the murder of Gonzago ?

*First Play.* Yes, my lord.

*Ham.* We shall have it to-morrow night. It might be necessary for you to get by heart a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines which I would compose and interpolate. You could manage it ?

*First Play.* Yes, my lord.

*Ham.* Very well. Accompany that lord, but do not however, make sport with him. [*Exit First Player.*] My good friends, I am parting from you until we meet again to-night. You are welcome to Elsinore.

*Ros.* Good my lord!

*Ham.* Ay, so, God be wi' ye! [*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*]. Now I am alone.
O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd;
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
What 's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears.
Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat,
As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?
Ha!
'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal:
Bloody, bloody, villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O, vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,

*Ror.* My good lord !

*Ham.* Good-bye to you ! [*Execunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*] Now I am alone. I am a knave and churl. Is it not incredible that this actor, enacting a mere story (which has nothing to do with truth) and feigning passion (which could not be his), could so stir up his mind to the concepticn that from its effect his face turned pale, tears stood in his eyes, and his features were distorted, his voice became chocked, and all his gestures and movements suited what he delivered. All this for Hecuba, who is nobody to him ! Why should Hecuba move him so much ? Would he not do much more if he had the same motive and cause of excitement as myself ? He would deluge the stage with tears, shock the hearers with his harrowing words, madden the guilty and scare the innocent, bewilder the ignorant and distract our senses. And what am I doing ? I seem to be wanting in spirit and capacity for action ; I am sitting idle, musing like John the dreamer, not provoked into action by the task to be fulfilled. I am taking no action for a king who has been killed and whose throne has been seized. Am I coward ? I must keep quiet if somebody calls me a villain, or breaks my head, or snatches off my beard and scatters it, or twists me by the nose, or insults me by calling me a liar. Am I not submitting to things worse than these ? I seem to be a coward, and to be wanting in the spirit of revenge, or I should have long ago fed the kites of the air with the flesh of this villain. It is a bloody, pitiless, faithless, lustful, non-human villain. O vegeance to be meted out to him ! I must be an ass ! I am indeed making a good show when I, the son of a dear father murdered.

Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, woman-like, unpack my heart with words,
And fall a cursing, like a very drab,
A scullion !
Fie upon 't ! foh ! About, my brain ! I have heard
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions ;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I 'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle : I 'll observe his looks ;
I 'll tent him to the quick ; if he but blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil ; and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape ; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me. I 'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play 's the thing
Wherein I 'll catch the conscience of the king. *[Exit.*

## ACT III.

### Scene I. *A Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, *and* Guildenstern.

*King.* And can you, by no drift of circumstance,
Get from him why he puts on his confusion,
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy ?

*Ros.* He does confess he feels himself distracted,
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

*Guil.* Nor do we find him forward to be sounded ;
But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.

*Queen.* Did he receive you well ?

*Ros.* Most like a gentleman.

*Guil.* But with much forcing of his disposition.

*Ros.* Niggard of question, but of our demands.
Most free in his reply.

stirred to revenge by powers of heaven and hell, like a woman, let nothing but words flow from me and start cursing like a slut, a kitchen-maid. I should be ashamed of it. Let my brain get to work ! I have heard that guilty persons have been let by the moving power of a scene on the stage to make a confession of their crimes. Murder may be hidden and silent, but by the most mysterious means it my be brought to light. I shall get these players to play something like the murder of my father before my uncle. I shall carefully study the shifting expressions of his face ; I shall probe his mind to the inmost. If he but reacts by turning pale, I know what my course of action will be. I am not sure that the spirit I have seen, might not be one from hell ; such a spirit may assume any deceptive shape and easily have sway upon men of weakness and melancholy like me to the damnation of the soul. I must make sure of my grounds for action, the mere visit of a ghost being not enought. The play is the best means of bringing to light the guilt of the king.

## ACT III.

### SCENE I. *A Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

*King.* Can you, by no indirect methods, elicit from him the cause of his disorderly conduct, verging on irresponsible acts of madness, which disturb the quiet tenor of his life.

*Ros.* He confesses that something troubles him, but he can never be persuaded to reveal the cause.

*Guil.* Nor do we find him pliable to be analysed. He parries us with his trick of madness when we attempt to get him to confess the cause of his trouble.

*Queen.* Did he receive you cordially ?

*Ros.* He received us with all the courtesy of a gentleman.

*Guil.* There appeared some constraint in his manner.

*Ros.* He did not talk much, but freely replied to the questions we put.

*Queen.* Did you assay him
To any pastime ?
*Ros.* Madam, it so fell out that certain players
We o'er-wrought on the way : of these we told him,
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it : they are about the court,
And as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.
*Pol.* 'Tis most true :
And he beseech'd me to entreat your majesties
To hear and see the matter.
*King.* With all my heart ; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined.
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.
*Ros.* We shall, my lord.
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*
*King.* Sweet Gertrude, leave us too ;
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,
That he, as 't were by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia :
Her father and myself, lawful espials,
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing, unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge,
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If 't be the affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.
*Queen.* I shall obey you :
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness : so shall I hope your virtues
With bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours.
*Oph.* Madam, I wish it may. [*Exit Queen*
*Pol.* Ophelia, walk you here. Gracious, so please you,
We will bestow ourselves. [*To Ophelia*] Read on this book :
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this—
'Tis too much proved—that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar oe'r
The devil himself.

*Queen.* Did you try to inveigle him into some amusement ?

*Ros.* Madam, it happened that we met some players on the way ; we told him of these players and there was a spark of joy in him. They have arrived here and, as I think, he would have them play before him tonight.

*Pol.* It is a fact. He requested me to pray your majesties to witness the play.

*King.* I will do it most gladly. I am so pleased to hear that he takes interest in it. Good gentlemen, give him further incentive to take delight in such things.

*Ros.* We shall, my lord. [*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.* ]

*King.* Dear Gertrude, please withdraw. We have sent for Hamlet secretly so that he may meet Ophelia here by chance. Her father and myself shall hide here and spy on him, as we may do in our right ; we shall remain unseen and see all that passes between them, and then can find out whether he is really afflicted by love or not.

*Queen.* I shall act as you tell me. Now, Ophelia, I wish that your beauty may be the cause of Hamlet's madness, and lead to a happy result. I shall hope too that your virtues will bring him back to his normal ways of life—and that it will mean an honourable life for both.

*Oph.* Madam, I wish it may. [*Exit Queen.*

*Pol.* Ophelia, you should walk here. If it may please, my lord, let us hide here. [ *To Ophelia*] Go on reading this book. This devotional exercise will be a good pretex for your loneliness. We cannot avoid blame in this matter— and it is too common—that with a semblance of devotion and piety we give a specious, innocuous appearance to a wicked deed.

*King.* [*Aside*] O, 'tis too true!
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word:
O heavy burthen!

*Pol.* I hear him coming: let 's withdraw, my lord.
[*Exeunt King and Polonius.*

*Enter* HAMLET

*Ham.* To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there 's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there 's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whip and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And make us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn away,

*King.* [*Aside*] Oh ! it is very true. These words of his whip my conscience. A prostitute paints her cheek but her painted cheek is less hateful to the rouge she uses than my action to my pious but dissembling words. Oh ! my conscience is heavily charged !

*Pol.* I hear him coming. Let us get away, my lord. [*Exeunt King and Polonius.*

*Enter* HAMLET

*Ham.* The main problem with me is whether I should go on living or end my life by suicide. Which is nobler in spirit ? To submit to all the trials of life, or to fight against them and overcome them ? Death may mean sleep, and it may be all for the good. If by sleep we put an end to the pain of the spirit and the manifold evils and disasters of life, no end will be more piously wished for. But the sleep of death may be attended by bad dreams ; that will make all the difference. When we have managed to escape all the strain and stress of life, the dreams that may trouble us in the sleep of death, will make us pause to think twice. It is this consideration that reconciles us to the ills of life. For who would bear the scorn and humiliation to which we are exposed in the world, the wrong and injustice that the oppressor inflicts upon us, the insulting treatment that we receive from a proud man, the pains of love rejected, the delay in law suits, the rudeness of the officer, the shabby deal which a man of merit receive, when he can get rid of these troubles by self-destruction ? Who would care to be heavily oppressed by the burden of life if the dread of the Unknown—death which is an unexplored country—did not confound his will and reconcile him to evils rather than risk others less known ? This speculation damps all our courage and so our resolution is tainted by reflection, and become ineffec-

And lose the name of action. Soft you now !
The fair Ophelia ! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

*Oph.* Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day ?

*Ham.* I humbly thank you : well, well, well.

*Oph.* My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to re-deliver ;
I pray you, now receive them.

*Ham.* No, not I ;
I never gave you aught.

*Oph.* My honour'd lord, you know right well you did ;
And with them words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich : their perfume lost,
Take these again, for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

*Ham.* Ha, ha ! are you honest ?

*Oph.* My lord.

*Ham.* Are you fair ?

*Oph.* What means your lordship ?

*Ham.* That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

*Oph.* Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty ?

*Ham.* Ay, truly ; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honest from what it is than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness : this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

*Oph.* Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

*Ham.* You should not have believed me, for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it ; I loved you not.

*Oph.* I was the more deceived.

*Ham.* Get thee to a nunnery, who wouldest thou be a breeder of sinners ? I am myself indifferent honest ; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me : I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offence at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven !

tive, and actions of high importance never materialize. Whom do I see here but fair Ophelia ! Nymph, may my sins be supplicated for in your prayers !

*Oph.* My good lord, how have you been keeping so long ?

*Ham.* I thank you in all humility. I am very, very well.

*Oph.* My lord, please receive the gifts which I received from you and which I have long desired to return.

*Ham.* I do not remember to have given you anything.

*Oph.* My worthy lord, you cannot forget that you gave me gifts, and they were made richer by the pleasant words that went with them. These pleasant words are now meaningless, and so please take back those gifts. To a noble mind gifts are not estimable when their givers become unkind. Here are the gifts, my lord.

*Ham.* Well, well, are you virtuous ?

*Oph.* What do you mean, my lord ?

*Ham.* Are you fair ?

*Oph.* I cannot understand you.

*Ham.* Supposing that you are virtuous and fair, let not your virtue associate with your beauty.

*Oph.* I cannot think that beauty can be better associated than with virtue.

*Ham.* That 's true ; for beauty has power to change virtue for the worse while virtue has none to affect beauty at all. This was formely known as something of a contradiction, but it has been been confirmed as truth by time. I loved you once.

*Oph.* My lord, you, indeed, gave me that impression.

*Ham.* You might have done well not to take me at my word; for, however, virtue may be engrafted upon us, we have to reckon with the original sin. I did not love you.

*Oph.* I was all the more deluded.

*Ham.* Get to a convent (and remain a maid for ever); otherwise you would bring sinners into the world. I am indifferntly honest ; yet I could charge myself with such vices that I wish that my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious—and there are more vices in contemplation, waiting to be executed—they have not yet taken possession of my thought or imagination, nor is it the time to put them into action. What is the use of such fellows as myself being alive on earth ?

We are arrant knave all ; believes none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father ?

*Oph.* At home, my lord.

*Ham* Let the door be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in h's own house. Farewell.

*Oph.* O, help him, you sweet heavens !

*Ham.* If thou dost marry, I 'll give thee this plague for thy dowry : be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go : farewell. Or if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool ; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go ; and quickly too. Farewell.

*Oph.* O heavenly powers, restore him ?

*Ham.* I have heard of your paintings too, well enough ; God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another : you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make you wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I 'll no more on 't ; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages ; those that are married already, all but one, shall live ; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go. [*Exit.*

*Oph.* O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown !
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's. eye, tongue, sword :
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down !
And I, of ladies most deject aad wretched,
Thas suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune, and harsh ;
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. O, woe is me,
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see !

Re-*enter* KING *and* POLONIUS

*King.* Love ! his affections do not that way tend !
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,
Was not like madness There 's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger : which for to prevent,
I have in quick determination

We are all thorough-going knaves; do not believe any of us. Get to a convent. Where is your father?

*Oph.* He is at home, my lord.

*Ham.* Let him not get out, but play the fool in his own house. Farewell.

*Oph.* May heavenly powers help him!

*Ham.* If you marry, you can expect no blessing, but this curse for your dowry: you may be as chaste as ice, as spotlessly innocent as snow, you will still be slandered. Go to a convent. Farewell. Or if you cannot help marrying, marry a fool, for wise men know how you play false with them, and make them cuckolds. Go to a convent, and quickly too. Farewell.

*Oph.* O heavenly powers, give him back his sanity!

*Ham.* I have heard how women paint themselves. You are not satisfied with the face God has given you; you must have a better one, and you touch up your face. You dance, mince your steps, talk in an affected tone, give pet names to men and things and plead your ignorance when you live in vice. I will put up no more with it; it has driven me mad. There shall be no more marriages, I say. All who are already married except one, shall live. I leave the rest alone. Go to a convent. [*Exit.*

*Oph.* A noble mind is wrecked! He was a courtier, soldier, scholar, all rolled together into one; he was the hope and delight of the state; he was the model of fashion and courtesy: he was the object of study to all—and now he is totally lost! And I am the most dejected and unhappy of all women who drank in his vows of love, so sweetly breathed. Now his clear-sighted reason is all a confusion like bells making discordant sounds, and that loveliest blossom of youth is withered by insanity. Alas! what a contrast between what I have seen, and what I see now!

*Re-enter* KING *and* POLONIUS

*King.* I do not see anything of love in this affair. All that he said, though it was a rambling talk, does not seem to proceed from madness. He must be brooding over something in his mind of which the outcome is his melancholy; I am afraid it may break out into some act of violence, against which I have deci-

Thus set it down:—he shall with speed to England,
For the demand of our neglected tribute:
Haply the seas and countries different
With variable objects shall expel
This something-settled matter in his heart,
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. What think you on 't?

*Pol.* It shall do well: but yet do I believe
The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love. How now, Ophelia!
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;
We heard it all. My lord, do as you please;
But, if you hold it fit, after the play,
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
To show his grief: let her be round with him;
And I 'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference. If she find him not,
To England send him, or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

*King.* It shall be so:
Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go. [*Exeunt*

## Scene II. *A Hall in the Castle.*

*Enter* Hamlet *and* Players.

*Ham.* Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus; but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who, for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumbshows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

*First Play.* I warrant your honour.

*Ham.* Be not too tame, neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now,

ded that he shall proceed at once to England to demand the payment of tribute that is due to us. Perhaps the sea-voyage and new scenes may dispel the cloudiness of his mind, which has altered his behaviour from the normal. What do you think of it ?

*Pol.* It may succeed. But I still believe that rejected love is the cause of his mental distraction. We see what it is, Ophellia! You need not go over all that Hamlet said. We heard it all. My lord, you may do what you think best. But if you think that it will serve any useful purpose, let his queen mother summon Hamlet after the play and beg him to confess to her what his grief is ; let her be quite straight with her. And if it may please you, I may overhear their conversation. If she cannot track out his trouble, send him to England, or confine him where you think best.

*King.* That will be allright. Madness in great ones must be guarded against.

SCENE II. *A Hall in the Castle.*

*Enter* HAMLET *and* PLAYERS.

*Ham.* Repeat the speech, please, after my manner with all ease and naturalness. But if you go ranting as many of the players do, I would rather a town-crier delivered the speech. Practise moderation after all—no wild waving of your arms. As you are sweept away by the vehemence of your emotion, you must attain measure and proportion to give your speech natural grace. It so jars on me to hear a lusty, wigged fellow break forth into a stormy bluster, assailing the ears of the spectators that stand on the ground—and these are the spectators who can enjoy senseless dumb-shows and ranting speches. Let such a fellow be whipped for beating hollow Termagant and Herod, characters in old Mysteries. You must avoid ranting.

*First Play.* I assure you, my lord.

*Ham.* Do not be flat and uninspiring either. Follow your common sense. Let action suit word and word suit action. In any case keep within the limit of moderation. Overacting defeats the very purpose of acting, which has always been to mimic nature—to reveal Virtue of scorn as it is, to reflect the world. Now if the acting is either overdone, or rendered

was and is, to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature ; to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve ; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

*First Play.* I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir.

*Ham.* O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clown speak no more than is set down for them : for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered : that 's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready.

[*Exeunt Players*

*Enter* POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

How now, my lord ! will the king hear this piece of work ?

*Pol.* And the queen too, and that presently.

*Ham.* Bid the players make haste. [*Exit Polonius*
Will you two help to hasten them ?

*Ros.* }
*Guil.* } We will, my lord.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*

*Ham.* What ho ! Horatio !

*Enter* HORATIO

*Hor.* Here, sweet lord, at your service.

*Ham.* Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.

*Hor.* O, my dear lord, —

*Ham.* Nay, do not think I flatter ;
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee ? Why should the poor be flatter'd ?

without life and vigour, the ignorant may enjoy it, but the wise spectators would condemn it and their opinion should carry weight. I have seen players, and I have heard them praised very highly, but these players, I do not mean to disparage them, do not speak or act like a Christian, or a pagan, or a man; they swagger on the stage and shout so that it may appear that not nature, but some henchmen of nature has made them with indifferent skill because they intimate human nature with such miserable failure.

*First Play.* I hope we have almost got over this habit, sir.

*Ham.* Eliminate it totally. See that those who play the clown do not go beyond the limit of their speech, for there are some who will make jokes and laugh to set the senseless spectators laughing, when in the meantime a decided turn in the action of the play is impending. This is detestable, and the fool who does this, is pitifully ambitious. Go and make ready.

[*Exeunt Players*

*Enter* POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

What do you say, my lord? Will the king attend the play?

*Pol.* The queen too is coming, and they will be here in no time.

*Ham.* Bid the players get ready at once. [*Enter Polonius*

Will you too assist in the matter?

*Ros.*
*Guil.* } We will, my lord.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*

*Ham.* What ho! Horatio!

*Enter* HORATIO

*Hor.* What do you will, my lord?

*Ham.* Horatio, you are as honest a man as ever I have come across in my life.

*Hor.* O my dear lord, it is too much.

*Ham.* I am not certainly flattering you. I expect no favour from you, whose only fund is but good spirits,—all that can feed and clothe you. I see no reason why I should flatter a poor

No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself: for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hath ta'en with equal thanks: the blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of hearts,
As I do thee. Something too much of this
There is a play to-night before the king;
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death:
I prithee, when thou seest that act a foot
Even with the very comment of thy soul
Observe my uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note:
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
And after we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.

*Hor.* Well, my lord:
If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

*Ham.* They are coming to the play: I must be idle:
Get you a place.

*Danish March. A flourish. Enter* KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN *and other Lords attendant, with the Guard carrying torches.*

*King.* How fares our cousin Hamlet?

*Ham.* Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-crammed: you cannot feed capons so.

*King.* I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.

man. Let the tongue of a flatterer please with its honeyed speech a man of wealth and position, and let him bend his knees and servility where he may expect to gain something. Do you hear? Since I have a mind of my own, which can distinguish one man from another, and make its choice.

I have chosen you; for you are one whom suffering can little upset, who cares little for the favour or disfavour of fortune. Blessed are those whose passion does not override their judgment so that they are little subject to the caprices of fortune. I want a man who is not enslaved by passion and I can cherish him in my heart, as I do you. I must now draw to an end. Tonight a play is being performed before the king. One scene of it mimics the circumstances of my father's death, as I have related to you. Do please study my uncle with a critical eye when that scene comes on. If his carefully hidden guilt is not dragged into the open by the effect of the speech, the ghost we have seen, must be one from hell, and my imagination must be tainted. Watch him closely: I will never let my gaze stray from him, and afterwards we shall compare notes and arrive at a considered view.

*Hor.* That 's right, my lord. If any change in the expression of his face goes undetected, blame me.

*Ham.* They are coming to the play. I must be at my old trick (playing the madman) again. Find a place for yourself.

*Danish March. A flourish. Enter* KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and other Lords attendant, with the Guard carrying torches.*

*King.* How is my cousin Hamlet doing?

*Ham.* Fine, indeed, just as a chameleon feeds on air. Mere promises are my food which will not keep a cock alive.

*King.* This is an answer I do not expect from you; such words should not be addressed to me.

*Ham.* No, ncr mine now. [*To Polonius*]. My lord, you played once i' the university, you say ?

*Pol.* That did I, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.

*Ham.* What did you enact ?

*Pol.* I did enact Julius Caesar : I was killed i' the Capitol ; Brutus killed me.

*Ham.* It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there. Be the players ready ?

*Ros.* Ay my lord ; they stay upon your patience.

*Queen.* Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

*Ham.* No, good mother, here 's metal more attractive.

*Pol.* [*To the King*] O, ho ! do you mark that ?

*Ham.* Lady, shall I lie in your lap ?

[*Lying down at Ophelia's feet.*

*Oph.* No, my lord.

*Ham.* I mean, my head upon your lap ?

*Oph.* Ay, my lord.

*Ham* Do you think I meant country matters ?

*Oph.* You are merry, my lord.

*Ham.* Who, I ?

*Oph.* Ay, my lord.

*Ham.* O God your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry ? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.

*Oph.* Nay, 't is twice two months, my lord.

*Ham.* So long ? Nay then, let the devil wear black, for I 'll have a suit of sables. O heaven ! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet ? Then there 's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year : but, by 'r lady, he must build churches then ; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby horse, whose epitaph is, 'For, O, for, O, the hobby horse is forget.'

*Hautboys plan. The dumb-show enters.*

*Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly ; the Queen embracing him, and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck ; lays him down upon a bank of flowers : she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison*

*Ham.* These words are not intentional. *[ To Polonius ]* My lord, you played once in the university. What do you say ?

*Pol.* Yes, I did, my lord. And I was esteemed a good player.

*Ham.* What role did you play ?

*Pol.* I played Julius Caesar. I was killed in the Capitol ; Brutus killed me.

*Ham.* It must have been unhandsome of him to kill so excellent a colt. Are the players ready ?

*Ros.* Yes, my lord. They are waiting on your command.

*Queen.* Come here, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

*Ham.* Thank you, good mother ; here is something more alluring.

*Pol.* *[To the King]* Do you notice that ?

*Ham.* Lady, shall I lie in your lap ?

*[Lying down at Ophelia's feet.*

*Oph.* No, my lord.

*Ham.* I mean—may I repose my head on your lap ?

*Oph.* Yes, my lord.

*Ham.* Do you think I suggested what is the custom among the rustics ?

*Oph.* You are in a playful mood, my lord.

*Ham.* Am I ?

*Oph.* Yes, my lord.

*Ham.* I am a stage fool at your service. What should a man be but a playful mood ? Look, how cheerful my mother is, and my father died but two hours ago.

*Oph.* No, it is twice two months, my lord.

*Ham.* Is it so long ? Then I shall no more wear a black suit. I will wear a costly suit. O God, he died two months ago, and he is not yet forgotten ! Then we may hope that a great man will be remembered half a year after his death. But, by the Virgin Mary, he must build churches then, or nobody would bother to remember him, like the hobby-horse in the old May games, later dropped (on account of the opposition of Puritans).

*Hautboys play. The dumb show enters*

*Enter a King and Queen very lovingly ; they embrace. On her knees the Queen makes a great protestation.*

He raises her and rests his head upon her neck, and then reposes upon a bank of flowers When he is asleep, she goes away. Then enters a fellow : he removes the king's crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the King's ears, and goes away. The

*in the King's ears and exit. The Queen returns; finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The Poisoner, with some two or three Mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner wooes the Queen with gifts: she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love.*

[ *Exeunt*

*Oph.* What means this, my lord ?

*Ham.* Marry, this is miching mallecho ; it meant mischief.

*Oph.* Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

*Enter Prologue*

*Ham.* We shall know by this fellow : the players cannot keep counsel they 'll tell all.

*Oph.* Will he tell us what this show meant ?

*Ham.* Ay, or any show that you 'll show him.

*Oph.* You are naught, you are naught : I 'll mark the play.

*Pro.* For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.

*Ham.* Is this a prologue, of the posy of a ring ?

*Oph.* 'Tis brief, my lord.

*Ham.* As woman's love.

*Enter two players, King, and Queen*

*P. King.* Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbed ground,
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been,
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

*P. Queen* Some many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done !
But woe is me, you are so sick of late.
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must :
For women's fear and love holds quantity,
In neither aught, or in extremity,
Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know,
And as my love is sized, my fear is so ;
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear,
Where little fears grow great love grows there.

*P. King.* Faith, I must leave thee, love and shortly too:
My operant powers their functions leave to do;
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,

Queen returns; finds the king dead, and breakes into a wild wail. The poisoner, accompanied by two or three funeral attendants, enters again, and seemingly laments with the Queen. The dead body is carried away. The poisoner makes love to the Queen and offers her gifts. At first she seems to be averse to his love, but accepts it at last.

[ *Exeunt.*

*Oph.* What is the meaning of this show, my lord?

*Ham.* By the Virgin Mary, it is a mischievous trick of the players.

*Oph.* Perhaps the show suggests the theme of the play.

*Enter Prologue*

*Ham.* This fellow will enlighten us. The players cannot keep anything concealed; they will reveal everything.

*Oph.* Will he interpret the show?

*Ham.* He will interpret any show that you may offer.

*Oph.* You are mischievous. I should better watch the play.

*Pro.* As for ourselves and the tragdey we present, we appeal to your kindness and desire your patient hearing.

*Ham.* Is this a prologue, or the motto of a ring?

*Oph.* It is very short, my lord.

*Ham.* As woman's love.

*Enter two players, King and Queen*

*P. King.* Fully thirty times has the sun in his chariot gone round the sea and earth, and thirty dozen moons with light borrowed have shown upon the world thirty dozen times since love united our hearts, and Hymen locked our hands.

*P. Queen.* May the sun and moon make as many journeys again before our love is ended. But alas! you have lately been so sick, having lost your former cheerfulness and health, and I am worried about you. But let this not distress you, my lord, for woman's fear and love go hand in hand, and show themselves in extremity whenever they exist. Time has given proof of my love, and my fear is proportioned to my love. Great love magnifies little fears. Little fears growing great are evidence of great love.

*P. King.* I shall leave you soon, dear. My active powers are failing, and you will outlive me in this fair world, loved and

Honour'd, beloved ; and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou—

*P. Queen.* O, confound the rest!
Such love must needs be treason in my breast,
In second husband let me be accurst!
None wed the second but who kill'd the first.

*Ham.* [*Aside.*] Wormwood, wormwood.

*P. Queen.* The instances that second marriage move
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love:
A second time I kill my husband dead,
When second husband kisses me in bed.

*P. King.* I do believe you think what now you speak,
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth but poor validity:
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree,
But fall unshaken when they mellow be.
Most necessary 't is that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt:
What to ourselves in passion we purpose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themeselves destroy:
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slander accident.
This world is not for aye, nor 't is not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change,
For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,
Whether love lead fortune or else fortune love.
The great man down, you mark his favourites flies;
The poor advanced makes friends of enemies:
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend;
For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
And who in want a hollow friend doth try
Directly seasons him his enemy
But, orderly to end where I begun,
Our wills and fates do so contrary run,
That our devices still are overthrown,
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own:
So think thou wilt no second husband wed,
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

*P. Queen.* Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light
Sport and repose lock from me day and night!
To desperation turn my trust and hope!
An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope!
Each opposite, that blanks the face of joy,
Meet what I would have well and it destroy!
Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,
If, once a widow, ever I be wife!

respected. Perhaps you may have again a husband as kind as myself—

*P. Queen.* Speak no more of it. Such love I regard as faithless. May I be condemned if I marry again ! No woman marries again unless she kills her first husband.

*Ham.* [*Aside*] How bitter it is !

*P. Queen.* The motives behind second marriage are not love, but mercenary considerations. I kill my husband a second time when my second husband kisses me in bed.

*P. King.* I believe that you now mean what you say, but we often abandon what we resolve on. Our intention is conditioned by our memory. Our intention is formed on a sudden impulse and without due consideration, but is too weak to last long. As fruits unripe hang on the tree, but when they are ripe, fall to the ground ; so is our attention that is formed in a moment of violent impulse. It necessarily follows that we forget to do what is due to ourselves, since what we resolved to do in a moment of excitment wears away with the excitement. The excess of either grief or joy in its course paralyses action ; joy breaks into a revel, and grief, into a lament. By a mere turn of circumstances grief passes into joy, and joy, into grief. This world will not exist for ever, and it is not unusual that love alters according to circumstances. It is a point yet to be decided whether love rules fortune or fortune rules love. When a great man loses power and fortune, his followers desert him ; when a poor man advances in life, his enemies become his friends—and in this case love attends fortune. He who can do without friends, will have any number of friends ; he who tests an insincere friend in his need, at once turns him his enemy. Let me end in the order I began : our will and fate run counter so that what we intend is defeated. We entertain ideas or purposes, but the accomplishment of these purposes is not within our control. So at present you think that you will not take a second husband, but this resolve of yours will perish when your first husband is dead.

*P. Queen.* Let not earth provide food, nor heaven light ; let mirth and rest be denied me day and night ; let my hope and trust be turned into despair ; let all that a hermit subsists on and a prison be the utmost allowed to me : let all that is antagonistic to joy blast the good or happiness I desire : let me have no peace of mind but perpetual conflict, if once a widow, I marry again !

*Ham.* If she should break it now!

*P. King.* 'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet leave me here a while;
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
The tedius day with sleep. [*Sleeps*]

*P. Queen.* Sleep rock thy brain;
And never come mischance between us twain! [*Exit.*

*Ham.* Madam, how like you this play?

*Queen.* The lady doth protest too much, me thinks.

*Ham.* O, but she 'll keep her word.

*King.* Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in 't?

*Ham.* No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i' the world.

*King.* What do you call the play?

*Ham.* The mouse-trap. Marry, how? Tropically. This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is the duke's name; his wife, Baptista: you shall see anon; 'tis a knavish piece of work; but what o' that? your majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not: let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.

*Enter* LUCIANUS

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

*Oph.* You are as good as a chorus, my lord.

*Ham.* I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying.

*Oph.* You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

*Ham.* Begin, murderer; pox, leave thy damnable faces, and begin, Come: the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.

*Luc.* Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing:
Confederate season, else ne creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collect,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property
On wholesome life usurp immediately.

[*Pours the poison into the sleeper's ear.*

*Ham.* He poisons him i' the garden for his estate. His name's Gonzago; the story is extant, and written in very choice Italian: you shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

*Ham.* If she should break her oath now !

*P King.* You have taken a solemn oath. Dear let me stay here awhile; I am drowsy and I would better relieve the tedious hours in sleep. [ *Sleeps*

*P. Queen.* May sleep give you good repose, and never a mishap occur to separate us ! [*Exit*

*Ham.* Madam, how do you like this play ?

*Queen.* It seems to me that the lady goes a little too far in taking so solemn an oath.

*Ham.* But I am sure the will be true.

*King.* Are you acquainted with the theme ? I hope there is nothing offensive in it.

*Ham.* No, no, it is no serious matter—the poisoning is but a joke. There can be nothing in it to offend our taste.

*King.* What do you call the play.

*Ham.* The Mouse-trap. Need I explain ? It is a mouse-trap in a figurative sense. The theme of the play is a murder in Vienna ; Gonzago is the name of the duke ; his wife Baptista, you will soon see what it is all about ; it has to do with villainy. But it cannot affect your majesty and ourselves because we have no crime on our conscience. Let the hard-driven, sore horse writhe in pain, we are unhurt.

*Enter* LUCIANUS

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

*Oph.* You seem to be as knowing as a chorus, my lord.

*Ham.* I could as well interpret your amorous game with your lovers as an interpreter at the puppet show.

*Oph.* You are, my lord, so sharp in mockery.

*Ham.* Begin, murderer. I cannot stand your execrable grimaces. Begin. It is time ; "the raven croaks, and it is the singal for revenge."

*Luc.* My thoughts are deadly ; my hands are ready to execute my purpose ; the poison is affective, and the time is ripe, and there is no witness present :

Your potent poison, compounded from herbs collected at midnight, with Hecate's curse thrice repeated upon it, act immediately with deadly effect upon life.

[ *Pours the poison into the sleeper's ear.*

*Ham.* He poisons him in the garden for his property. His name is Gonzago ; the story is still current, and is written in good Italian. You will see soon how the murderer secures the love of Gonzago's wife.

*Oph.* The king rises.
*Ham.* What, frighted with false fire !
*Queen.* How fares my lord ?
*Pol.* Give o'er the play.
*King.* Give me some light. Away !
*Pol.* Lights, lights, lights !
[*Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio*

*Ham.* Why, let the strucken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play ;
For some must watch while some must sleep ;
Thus runs the world away.

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers—if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me—with two Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir ?

*Hor.* Half a share.
*Ham.* A whole one, I.
For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself ; and now reigns here
A very, very— pajock.

*Hor.* You might have rhymed.
*Ham.* O good Horatio, I 'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive ?
*Hor.* Very well, my lord.
*Ham.* Upon the talk of the poisoning ?
*Hor.* I did very well note him.
*Ham.* Ah, ha ! Come, some music ! come, the recorders !
For if the king like not the comedy,
Why then, belike, he likes it not, perdy,
Come, some music !

*Re-enter* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN

*Guil.* Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.
*Ham.* Sir, a whole history.
*Guil.* The King sir,—
*Ham.* Ay, sir, what of him ?
*Guil.* Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.
*Ham.* With drink, sir ?
*Guil.* No, my lord, rather with choler.
*Ham.* Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to the doctor : for, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

*Oph.* The King rises.
*Ham.* The King seems to be alarmed for nothing.
*Queen.* How is my lord ?
*Pol.* Let the play be suspended.
*King.* light for me please ! I am leaving.
*Pol.* Lights, lights lights !

[ *Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.*

*Ham.* The hurt dear will get into the bush and weep, while the unhurt one will play. It is for some to keep awake and for others to sleep, and so the world goes on. Do you not think that this composition of mine and the wearing of feathers–no matter if fortune lets me down in other respects—and two rosettes of ribbon worm on the shoes, will admit me as one of the players ?

*Hor.* You will be admitted as half a player.

*Ham.* I say, a full one. O Damon dear, you know that Jove was dispossessed of this kingdom and now reigns in his place a peacock.

*Hor.* You might have started writing verses.

*Ham.* O good Horatio, I would pay any price for the ghost's word. Did you perceive the king's behaviour ?

*Hor.* Very well, my lord.

*Ham.* Did you observe how he reacted to the talk of poisoning ?
*Hor.* I observed him minutely.

*Ham.* Come, let us have some music. Let the recorders be brought ! If the king does not like the comedy, it is no matter. Let us have some music.

*Re-enter* ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

*Guil.* My good lord, may I have a word with you ?
*Ham.* You can have, sir, any amount of words with me.
*Guil.* The King, sir—
*Ham.* Yes, what is the matter with the King ?
*Guil.* The King greatly disturbed after he left.
*Ham.* Is it with drink ?
*Guil.* No, my lord, it is with anger.
*Ham.* You should have been wiser to report the case to a doctor. If I were to set him right, he would get more distempered (with anger).

*Guil.* Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame and start not so wildly from my affair.

*Ham.* I am tame, sir : pronounce.

*Guil.* The Queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.

*Ham.* You are welcome.

*Guil.* Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment : if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

*Ham.* Sir, I cannot.

*Guil.* What, my lord ?

*Ham* Make you a wholesome answer ; my wit's diseased : but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command ; or rather, as you say, my mother : therefore no more, but to the matter : my mother, you say,—

*Ros.* Then thus she says ; your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

*Ham.* O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother ! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration ? Impart.

*Ros.* She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed.

*Ham.* We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us ?

*Ros.* My lord, you once did love me.

*Ham.* So I do still, but these pickers and stealers.

*Ros.* Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper ? You do surely bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

*Ham.* Sir, I lack advancemment.

*Ros.* How can that be, when you have the voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark ?

*Ham.* Ay, sir, but 'while the grass grows'—the proverb is something musty.

*Re-enter* PLAYERS *with recorders*

O, the recorders ! let me see one. To withdraw with you :— why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil ?

*Guil.* O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

*Guil.* My good lord, please talk more coherently, and do not parry the question.

*Ham.* I bow down your authority. Go on.

*Guil.* The queen, your mother is very unhappy over the matter, and sends me to you.

*Ham.* I welcome you.

*Guil.* If you please, my good lord, this is not the way of treating your friend. If you design me a good answer, I shall communicate your mother's command. If not, I beg your pardon and return without further talk.

*Ham.* Sir, I cannot.

*Guil.* What, my lord ?

*Ham.* I cannot give a good answer. My brain is affected, but you can demand such answer as I can make, or as my mother demands. Now come to the point : Yes, my mother—

*Ros.* She says this : Your behaviour has astounded her.

*Ham.* It must be a wonderful son then. Is there anything else following upon my mother's amazement ? Tell me.

*Ros.* She desires to talk to you in her private room before your retire.

*Ham.* I must obey even if she were ten times my mother. Have you anything else to do with me ?

*Ros.* My lord, you once loved me.

*Ham.* I swear by these hands of mine that I love you still.

*Ros.* My good lord, what is the cause of your trouble ? You will have your liberty restricted, if you do not take your friend into confidence.

*Ham.* Sir, I am kept back from what is my due.

*Ros.* How can that be when the King has given the word that you will succeed to the throne of Denmark ?

*Ham.* But you know the proverb, 'while the grass grows'—; it is, however, a worn out proverb

*Re-enter* PLAYERS *with recorders*

Here are recorders ; let me see one. Let us remove from here—why do you try to wheedle out of me my secret ?

*Guil.* My lord, in doing my duty I seem to be a bit too earnest and so in my love for you I am a bit ruder than I should be.

*Ham.* I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

*Guil.* My lord, I cannot.

*Ham.* I pray you.

*Guil.* Believe me, I cannot.

*Ham.* I do beseech you.

*Guil.* I know no touch of it, my lord.

*Ham.* It is as easy as lying; govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

*Guil.* But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

*Ham.* Why look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me.

*Re-enter* POLONIUS

God bless you, sir!

*Pol.* My lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently.

*Ham.* Do you see yonder cloud that 's almost in shape of a camel?

*Pol.* By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

*Ham.* Me thinks it is like a weasel.

*Pol.* It is backed like a weasel.

*Ham.* Or like a whale?

*Pol.* Very like a whale.

*Ham.* Then I will come to my mother by and by. They fool me to the top of my bent. I will come by and by.

*Pol.* I will say so. [*Exit Polonius*

*Ham.* 'By and by' is easily said. Leave me, friends.

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet*

'Tis now the very witching time of night.
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on.

*Ham.* I do not understand what you meant. Will you play a tune upon his pipe ?

*Guil.* My lord, I cannot.

*Ham.* I entreat you.

*Guil.* I have no knowledge of it, my lord.

*Ham.* To play upon it is as easy as to tell lies, touch these holes with your fingers and thumb, and put your breath into it, and it will emit the most excellent music. Look, these are the stops.

*Guil.* But I cannot bring music out of them. I confess my ignorance.

*Ham.* Now listen ! You take me as a much simpler mechanism. You would play upon me and draw out the secret trouble of my mind ; you seem to know the workings of my mind, and think that you could easily turn me inside out and discover my inner trouble. You would like to play on the whole gamut of musical notes in me : there is much music in this organ, but you cannot make it vocal. Do you think that you can play upon me more easily than upon a pipe ? You take me to be a simpler instrument than the pipe, you can just irritate me, but get nothing out of me.

*Re-enter* POLONIUS

May God bless you, sir !

*Pol.* My lord, the queen would have a word with you, and that immediately.

*Ham.* Do you see that patch of cloud looking like a camel ?

*Pol.* Indeed, it does look like a camel.

*Ham.* No, it looks like a weasel.

*Pol.* It has the back of a weasel.

*Ham.* Or does is not look like a whale ?

*Pol.* Yes, it is very like a whale.

*Ham.* Then I shall be visiting my mother soon. They want to make me play the fool to the utmost limit. I am coming soon.

*Pol.* I shall so report. [*Exit Polonius.*

*Ham.* I have said 'soon'. That 's enough. You may go, my friends. [*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

It is the weird time of night when churchyards open wide, and hell exhales infection. Now I could do a bloody deed that the day would shudder at .

Soft! now to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:
Let me be cruel, not unnatural;
I will speak daggers to her, but use none;
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites,
How in my words soever she be shent,
To give them seals never, my soul, consent! [*Exit*

SCENE III. *A Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* KING, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN

*King.* I like him not, nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;
I your commission will forthwith dispatch,
And he to England shall along with you;
The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.

*Guil.* We will ourselves provide:
Most holy and religious fear it is
To keep those many many bodies safe
That live and feed upon your majesty.

*Ros.* The single and peculiar life bound
With all the strength and armour of the mind
To keep itself from noyance; but much more
That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests
The lives of many. The cease of majesty
Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw
What 's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortised and adjoin'd; which, when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

*King.* Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage,
For we will fetters put about this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.

*Ros.* }
*Guil.* } We will haste us.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

But let me be patient. First, I must visit my mother. Let my heart not grow stern. I must keep out the wanton brutality of Nero. Let me be cruel, but not go beyond the normal limit. I shall be very stern in my speech, but avoid all sternness in action. So my tongue would not correspond to what is raging within my heart. However, she may be castigated in words, I will have no action to match them.

## SCENE III. *A Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* KING, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN.

*King.* I cannot stand him ; nor is it safe for us to give his madness free scope. Therefore, you, must be prepared to accept a commission from me, and he shall leave with you straight for England. It is too risky to keep him by our side when his madness is increasing day by day.

*Guil.* We shall make the necessary provision for our journey. It is a sacred duty, which fear dictates, of ensuring the safety of so many people who depend on your majesty.

*Ros.* It is the interest of every individual to safeguard himself by all means against any evil that threatens his existence. It is much more imperative for a person upon whose safety depends the lives of many. When the King perishes others are swallowed up too with him. It is like a massive wheel, placed on the summit of the highest mountain, whose spokes spread over a multitude of things ; and when it breaks down, all that is in any way connected with it, is wrecked with it. The King never sighs alone, but the sighs of a thousand of others accompany it.

*King.* You must hurriedly prepare yourselves for this journey ; the person whom we fear must be restricted in his movement.

*Ros.* } *Guil.* } We shall hastily prepare ourselves.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

*Enter* Polonius

*Pol.* My lord, he 's going to his mother's closet :
Behind the arras I 'll convey myself,
To hear the process : I 'll warrant she 'll tax him home :
And, as you said, and wisely was it said,
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech, of vantage. Fare you well, my liege :
I 'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

*King.* Thanks, dear my lord.

[*Exit Polonius.*

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven ;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will :
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent
And like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow ? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence ?
And what 's in prayer but this twofold force,
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down ? Then I 'll look up ;
My fault is past. But O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn ? 'Forgive me my foul murder ?'
That cannot be, since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition and my queen,
May one be pardon'd and retain the offence ?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence 's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 't is seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law : but 't is not so above ;
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature ; and we ourselves compell'd
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
To give in evidence. What then ? what rests ?

*Enter* POLONIUS

*Pol.* My lord he is going to his mother's chamber. I shall hide myself behind the arras and listen to their conversation. I am sure she will talk roundly to him and spare him not. And as you remarked, and that you did wisely, that there must be some other witness by to overhear what a mother talks to her son since a mother is likely to be partial to the son. Farewell, my King. I shall see you before you go to bed, and report to you what I have heard.

*King.* Thanks, my dear lord. [ *Exit Polonius.*

Oh, my crime is putrid, and it is loathsome to heaven. It is as heinous as the first murder done in the world—the murder of a brother by Cain. I cannot pray, though I have as strong an inclination as my will. My guilt prevails over, and defeats my will. Like a man, wavering in his action. I hesitate and do not know where I shall begin—and nothing doing. If this hand of mine stained with the blood of a brother, had a heavier coating of blood, there must be rain enough in heaven to wash it clean. What purpose can God's mercy serve if it cannot encounter and overcome sin? The function of prayer must be this to anticipate and guard off sin, or to secure forgiveness for the sin committed. Then if I look up to heaven in prayer, my sin is gone. But what kind of prayer should I offer ? Shall I say, "Forgive the foul murder I have done" ? That cannot do, for I am still enjoying all that I have won by crime—the crown, the ambition to rule, and the queen. May one be forgiven and still retain all that is gained by crime ? In the corrupt world like ours justice can be bought off and crime goes unpunished, and often all that is gained by crime is immune from the law. It is otherwise in heaven. There is no getting away from the consequence of crime, there the crime stands exposed, and we have to pay the full penalty,

Try what repentance can : what can it not ?
Yet what can it when one cannot repent ?
O wretched state ! O bosom black as death !
O limed soul, that struggling to be free
Art more engaged ! Help, angels ! make assay !
Bow, stubborn knees, and, heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new born babe !
All may be well.

[ *Retires and kneels.*

*Enter* HAMLET

*Ham.* Now might I do it pat, now he is praying ;
And now I 'll do 't : and so he goes to heaven :
And so am I revenged. That would be scann'd ;
A villain kills my father ; and for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
He took my father grossly, full of bread,
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May ;
And how his audit stands who knows save heaven ?
But in our circumstance and course of thought,
'Tis heavy with him ; and am I then revenged,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage ?
No.
Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid bent ;
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed ;
At game, a-swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in 't ;
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays :
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days. [ *Exit*

*King.* [*Rising*] My words fly up, my thoughts remain below :
Words without thoughts never to heaven go. [*Exit*

SCENE IV. *The Queen's Closet*

*Enter* QUEEN *and* POLONIUS

*Pol.* He will come strait. Look you lay home to him :

admitting all the particulars of our offence. What remains for me to do then ? Shall I put myself into repentance, and what cannot repentance do ? But my condition is the worst imaginable. My heart is black as death. My ensnared soul; struggling to get free, is further involved. Let angels help me. Let me try. Down, you unbending knees ! Heart, hardened like steel, be soft like the nerves of a new-born baby. All may be well.

[*Retires and kneels*

*Enter* HAMLET

*Ham.* Now he is at prayer, and I might easily murder him. If I do it now, I send him to heaven. And this would be a revenge indeed ! It needs to be carefully examined. A villain kills my father, and I, the only son to avenge his murder, dispatch the murderer to heaven. This would be no revenge, but doing him a service for which I am paid. He murdered my father with sins in his full bloom as in spring-time. And who knows what account he can render to God ? But so far as we, mortals can conceive, his account is on the debit side. Am I then revenged if I kill him when he is in the act of purifying his soul by prayer, when he is best prepared to be sent to heaven. No let my sword be wielded to execute a more horrible purpose than the present moment allows. When he is drunk asleep, or in a violent temper, or when he is in bed, full of lust and pleasure in incestuous union, or when he is gambling, swearing, or doing something which denies him any chance of salvation, then let me lay him low with the stroke of my sword so that his soul damned, goes to hell. My mother waits for me. My medicine is but to prolong your sickness. [*Exit.*

*King* [*Rising*]. My words fly into the air, my thoughts are tied to the earth—and remain furtile. Words, not accompanied by action, cannot reach heaven. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV. *The Queen's Closet*

*Enter* QUEEN and POLONIUS

*Pol.* He will be coming soon. Do not spare him ; tell him

Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
And that your grace hath screen'd and stood between
Much heat and him. I 'll silence me even here.
Pray you, be round with him.

*Ham* [*Within*] Mother, mother, mother!

*Queen.* I 'll warrant you; fear me not. Withdraw, I hear him coming. [*Polonius hides behind the arras.*

*Enter* HAMLET

*Ham.* Now, mother, what 's the matter?
*Queen.* Hamlet, thou have thy father much offended.
*Ham.* Mother, you have my father much offended.
*Queen.* Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.
*Ham.* Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.
*Queen.* Why, how now, Hamlet?
*Ham.* What 's the matter now?
*Queen.* Have you forgot me?
*Ham.* No, by the rood, not so:
You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And—would it were not so!—you are my mother.
*Queen.* Nay, then, I 'll set those to you that can speak.
*Ham.* Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.
*Queen.* What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?
Help, help, ho!
*Pol.* [*Behind*] What, ho! help, help, help!
*Ham.* [*Drawing*] How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!
[*Makes a pass through the arras.*
*Pol.* [*Behind*] O, I am slain! [*Falls and dies*
*Queen.* O me, what hast thou done?
*Ham.* Nay, I know not: is it the king?
*Queen.* O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!
*Ham.* A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.
*Queen.* As kill a king!
*Ham.* Ay, lady, 't was my word.
[*Lifts up the arras and discovers Polonius*

that his mad tricks have gone too far, and that you have personally intervened to save him from unpleasant consequences. I shall keep still here behind the arras.

*Ham.* [*Within*] Mother, mother, mother!

*Queen.* I assure you I shall not fail in my duty. Withdraw, I hear him coming. [*Polonius hides behind the arras.*

*Enter* HAMLET

*Ham.* Now, mother, what is the matter?

*Queen.* Hamlet, you have, by your conduct, highly displeased your father.

*Ham.* Mother, you have highly displeased my father.

*Queen.* I tell you that you answer me rashly.

*Ham.* Let me tell you that you question me vilely.

*Queen.* What are you at, Hamlet?

*Ham.* Yes, what is the matter?

*Queen.* Have you forgotten what I am to you?

*Ham.* No, by the Cross, certainly not. You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife, and—I wish it were not so—you are my mother.

*Queen.* Well, then, let me get those whom you cannot sneer at to speak to you.

*Ham.* You would do well to sit. I will not let you move from this place until I hold up a mirror which will reflect your inmost soul.

*Queen.* What are you going to do? You are not going to kill me? Help, ho!

*Pol.* [*Behind*] What, ho! help, help!

*Ham.* [*Drawing*] Is that a rat screeching? Dead, I can bet. [*Makes a pass through the arras.*

*Pol.* [*Behind*] Oh, I am slain! [*Falls and dies*

*Queen.* Alas! what have you done?

*Ham.* I do not know. Is it the king?

*Queen.* You have done a bloody deed!

*Ham.* A bloody deed! It must almost be as bad, good mother, as killing a king and marrying his brother?

*Queen.* As killing a king! What are you driving at?

*Ham.* Yes, I mean that—killing a king. [*Lifts up the arras and discovers Polonius.*

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell !
I took thee for thy better : take thy fortune ;
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.
Leave wringing of your hands :
Peace ! sit you down,
And let me wring your heart : for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff ;
If damned custom have not braz'd it so,
That it be proof and bulwark against sense.
*Queen.* What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me ?
*Ham.* Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there ; makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths : O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words : heaven's face doth glow ;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.
*Queen.* Ay me, what act,
That roars so loud and thunders in the index ?
*Ham.* Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See what a grace was seated on this brow ;
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command ;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill ;
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal
To give the world assurance of a man :
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows :
Here is your husband ; like a mildew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes ?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor ? Ha ! have you eyes ?
You cannot call it love, for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it 's humble,

You miserable, rash, meddlesome fool, fare well ! I thought that it was the king. It is the will of fortune. Now you find how risky it is to poke your nose into the affairs of others. No more of wringing of your hands. Be composed, and sit down, madam, and let me turn your heart inside out, for I am going to do that, if your heart is not contracted within itself, if it is not frozen hard by insensibility, and dead to all feeling.

*Queen.* What have I done that you speak so harshly and noisily to me ?

*Ham.* Such an act as annuls modesty, abuses virtue, taints and seers pure love, reduces marriage vows to oaths of gamblers. It is a deed that makes a marriage contract meaningless and degrades religion to mere verbal play. It makes the face of heaven blush, and this solid and compact earth turn pale and dismal as against the last day of judgment.

*Queen.* Let me hear what the act is that deliver itself in such wild and vehement words before its actual nature is revealed.

*Ham.* Look here upon this picture and that one. They are the portraits of the two brothers. Look at the beauty and comeliness, stamped on this brow, the curls of Hyperion the sun-god, the forehead of Jove himself, the eyes of Mars with a majestic look, a bearing like that of Mercury, the messenger of the gods, just alighted on a lofty mountain. Every god seemed to have lent his hand in moulding a figure in which all graces and attributes were combined, so that the world might see the very image of manhood. This was your husband. Look upon the picture of your present husband. It is like a tainted ear of corn whose very breath is poisonous to his healthy brother. Have you eyes ? Could you exchange this fair mountain just to gorge on that moor (Claudius) ? I ask, have you eyes ? You cannot call it love ; for at your age, passion is dull and passive ;

And waits upon the judgement : and what judgement
Would step from this to this ? Sense sure you have,
Else could you not have motion : but sure that sense
Is apoplex'd : for madness would not err,
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
But it reserved some quantity of choise,
To serve in such a difference. What devil was 't
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind ?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.
O shame ! where is thy blush ? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax
And melt in her own fire : proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,
And reason panders will.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, speak no more :
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.

*Ham.* Nay, but to live,
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love—

*Queen.* O, speak to me no more ;
These words like daggers enter in my ears ;
No more, sweet Hamlet !

*Ham.* A murderer and a villain ;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord ; a vice of kings ;
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole
And put it in his pocket !

*Queen.* No more !

*Ham.* A king of shreds and patches —

*Enter* Ghost

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards ! What would your gracious figure ?

*Queen.* Alas, he 's mad !

and is subject to reason or judgment. What judgment could lead you to choose one for the other. You have certainly feeling, or you could have no impulses or desires. But your feeling is surely paralysed, for even one mad would not make the mistake that you have made ; and even sense could not be so overpowered by madness as to choose so blindly in a case where the difference is so striking. It must be some devil that has deluded. If you had your senses more or less atrophied except the sense of smell, or had but left one diseased sense, you could not have made such a blunder. O shame ! I do not see you even blush ! If hell could raise a revolt in the withered bones of a middle-aged woman, what chance could have virtue in youth, aflame with passion ? It is no matter of shame when vehemence of passion overthrows reason since passion frozen dead rekindles, and reason is made to justify it.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, speak no more. You have laid bare my very soul to me, it is so tainted and blackened !

*Ham.* Yet, to go on living in coarse sensuality, and in amorous delights.

*Queen.* Speak no more to me. These words stab my ears. Speak no more, good Hamlet.

*Ham.* He is a murderer and villain, a slave who cannot be matched with the least part of your previous lord, the clown of a king, a thief and usurper, who stole the crown from a shelf and put it into his pocket.

*Queen.* You have said enough.

*Ham.* A tomfool of a king.

*Enter* Ghost

Save me, and you heavenly angels, cover me with your wings. What is your pleasure ?

*Queen.* Alas, he is mad !

*Ham.* Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread command?
O'say!
*Ghost.* Do not forget this visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But look, amazement on thy mother sits:
O, step between her and her fighting soul:
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works:
Speak to her, Hamlet.
*Ham.* How it is with you, lady?
*Queen.* Alas, how is it with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,
Start up and stand on end. O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?
*Ham.* On him, on him! Look you how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable. Do not look upon me,
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects:
Then what I have to do
Will want true colour; tears perchance for blood.
*Queen.* To whom do you speak this?
*Ham.* Do you see nothing there?
*Queen.* Nothing at all: yet all that is I see.
*Ham.* Nor did you nothing hear?
*Queen.* No, nothing but ourselves.
*Ham.* Why, look you there! look, how it steals away
My father, in his habit as he lived!
Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!
[ *Exit Ghost*

*Queen.* This is the very coinage of your brain:
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.
*Ham.* Ecstasy!
My pulse, as yours doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music: it is not madness

*Ham.* Have you come to stir up your son, so slow in action, who giving way to delay and melancholy, has neglected to fulfil your solemn charge ? Oh ! say what is your pleasure ?

*Ghost.* Do not forget ; I am here to incite your purpose which is getting torpid. Look, your mother is beside with amazement ; comfort and soothe her. Imagination has a great hold on weak persons, speak to her, Hamlet.

*Ham.* How do you fare, lady ?

*Queen.* Alas, how do you fare ? You are staring into the vacancy and converse with the airy nothing. Your eyes seem to be bursting out, and like sleeping soldiers staring up at an alarm, your flatly laid hair stands on end as if it had life in it. O gentle son, allay your excitement with patience. On what are you gazing ?

*Ham.* On him, on him ! Look, what a ghastly glance he casts at us ! His look and cause combined, if they could speak to stones, would move them to action. Turn away your gaze from me or that pity-stirring look of yours might weaken my resolve. Then my action would stop short of bloodshed, and end in tears.

*Queen.* Whom are you addressing ?

*Ham.* Do you see nothing there ?

*Queen.* I see nothing except all that is materially present.

*Ham.* Nor did you hear anything ?

*Queen.* No, nothing but ourselves talking.

*Ham.* Look there, how the phantom creeps away ! My father in the very dress he wore when he was alive. Look, there goes out at the gate !

[ *Exit Ghost*

*Queen.* This is conjured up by your imagination. It is the fantasy that madness is very clever to bring into life.

*Ham.* You say madness ! My pulse beats to measure like yours. I have not spoken like a mad man. Examine me ; 'I shall be able to repeat what I have said, while a mad man will make a mess of it.' Mother, for the sake of God, do not delude

That I have utter'd : bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word, which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass but my madness speaks :
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whiles rank corruption mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven ;
Repent what 's past, avoid what is t come,
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue,
For in the fatness of these pursy times.
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg.
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

*Ham.* O throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night : but go not to my uncle's bed ;
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock of livery,
That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence ; the next more easy ;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either master the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night :
And when you are desirous to be blest,
I 'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord,
[ *Pointing to Polonius*
I do repent : but heaven hath pleased it so,
To punish me with this, and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.
I must be cruel, only to be kind :
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.
One word more, good lady.

*Queen.* What shall I do ?

*Ham.* Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:

yourself with that idle comfort that not your offence but my madness impels me to speak thus. Such a delusive comfort will not cure the moral ulcer, but will drive it inward. Confess your sin to God ; repent the past, and keep yourself in hand so that you do not lapse into sin again, and do nothing to pamper your sin. My virtue speaks to you, and let its boldness be excused, for in these degenerate times virtue must beg forgiveness of vice, nay, humbly beg permission to help the latter.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, you have split open my heart.

*Ham.* Throw away the corrupt part of it, and begin a new life with the purer part. Good night. Do not sleep with my uncle. Put on the appearance of virtue, if you have none of it. Custom is a monster, devouring all sensibility, but while it is an evil genius in that it gives us unalterable habits, it is an angel in that it gives a fair appearance to virtue that we assume and practise. Do not have anything to do with my uncle to-night, and it will make it easy for you to cut him finally step by step. Practice (in the contrary direction) may almost alter our original nature or habit, and either get the better of the evil within, or totally root it out, so wonderfully effective it can be. Good night, once more. When you desire blessing of God, I shall beg to be blessed by you. As to this Lord.

[*Pointing to Polonius.*

I repent but it so willed by God : I should be his executor, while the role has been painful to me. I shall deposit him somewhere, and bear all responsibility for his death. So good night, again. I mean only your good, and that is why I am so stern. Something still worse remains to be done ; it is only the beginning. One word more, good lady.

*Queen.* What shall I do ?

*Ham.* Not this certainly—I cannot mean it : let the bloated

Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed ;
Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse ;
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know ;
For who, that 's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
Such dear concernings hide ?
Who would do so ?
No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape,
To try conclusions, in the basket creep
And break your own neck down.

*Queen.* Be thou assured, if words be made of breath
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.

*Ham.* I must to England ; you know that ?

*Queen.* Alack,
I had forgot : 'tis so concluded on.

*Ham.* There 's letters seal'd : and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,
The bear the mandate ; they must sweep my way,
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work ;
For 'tis the sport to have the enginer
Hoist with his own petar : and 't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon : O, 'tis most sweet
When in one line two crafts directly meet.
This man shall set me packing :
I 'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.
Mother, good night. Indeed this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret and most grave,
Who was in life a foolish prating knave.
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.
Good night, mother.

*Exeunt severally ; Hamlet dragging in Polonius*

king lure you to bed again, stroke your cheek playfully, call you honey, and for a steaming kiss or two, or digging in your neck with his foul fingers tempt you to tell him everything—that my madness is a crafty one. It would indeed be right if you let him know, for you, a queen, lovely, self-restrained and discreet could not certainly conceal from a toad, a bat, or a cat—for such he is—things concerning him vitally! You might act contrary to sense and secrecy, like "the famous ape," who carried a cage of birds to the top of a house, let out the birds and seeing them in flight, tried the experiment by creeping into the cage and letting himself down and thus breaking his neck.

*Queen.* Let me assure you that I will never breathe to anybody what you have said, if words are made of breath and breath is very llfe.

*Ham.* Do you know that I am going to England?

*Queen.* It is a pity I forgot all about it. It has been so resolved on.

*Ham.* Letters are packed and sealed. My two schoolfellows bear the commission; I shall trust them as much fanged serpents. They will put me on to a deed of wickedness. Let the plan proceed. It is a nice thing to blow up the contriver of a plot with his own device. I shall fare ill if I cannot defeat them with a counterplot. It is very exciting when craft is met by craft in action. The death of this man will set me plotting or getting away from here. I shall thrust the dead body into the next room. Good night, mother. This counsellor, while alive was a foolish fellow, always talking, but would keep quiet now, telling no tales and never losing his solemnity. Let me have done with you, sir. Good night mother.

[*Exeunt severally*; *Hamlet dragging in Polonius.*

## ACT IV

### SCENE I. *A Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

*King.* There 's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves:
You must translate: 'tis fit we understand them.
Where is your son?

*Queen.* Bestow this place on us a little while.
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*
Ah, mine own lord, what have I seen to-night?

*King.* What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

*Queen.* Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier: in his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier cries 'A rat, a rat!'
And in this brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man.

*King.* O, heavy deed!
It had been so with us had we been there:
His liberty is full of threats to all.
To you yourself, to us, to every one.
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?
It will laid to us, whose providence
Should have kept short, restrain'd and out of haunt,
This mad young man: but so much was our love,
We would not understand what was most fit,
But, like the owner of a foul disease,
To keep it from divulging, let it feed
Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone?

*Queen.* To draw apart the body he hath kill'd:
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore
Among a mineral of metals base,
Shows itself pure; he weeps for what is done.

*King.* O Gertrude, come away!
The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,
But we will ship him hence: and this vile deed
We must, with all our majesty and skill,
Both countenance and excuse. Ho, Guildenstern!

*Re enter* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him:

## ACT IV.

### Scene I. *A Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* King, Queen, Rosencrantz, *and* Guildenstern.

*King.* You should better explain what your deep, long-drawn sigh could indicate. We should know the reason for them. Where is your son ?

*Queen.* Leave us to ourselves for a while.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Ah, my lord, how can I tell you what I have seen to-night ?

*King.* What is the matter, Gertrude ? How is Hamlet ?

*Queen.* Mad as the contending sea and wind, each outbidding the other. In his fit of violence, hearing a noise behind the arras, gets out his rapier, cries a rat, and in his craziness kills the unseen good old man.

*King.* It is a deed involving very serious consequences. If I had been there, I might have shared the same fate. His freedom is a menace to us all—to you, to me, to everybody. I do not know how this bloody deed will be explained. We shall be charged with it, for if we had taken thought before, we could have kept this mad young man under restraint, but our love for man prevented us from doing the right thing in the matter. We acted as one concealing his foul disease and letting it undermine his system. Where is he gone ?

*Queen.* He is going to put away the dead body somewhere. He repents what he has done. So his madness reveals some redeeming feature just like gold being found among base metals.

*King.* O Gertrude, let us go. Before the sun is up above the mountain, we shall pack him off in a ship. This bloody deed we cannot condemn outright, but must condone as best we can by our sovereign power and tactfulness. Ho, Guildenstern !

*Re-enter* Rosencrantz *and* Guildenstern.

My two friends, take the assistance of some other people. Hamlet in his madness has killed Polonius, and dragged away the dead body from his mother's chamber.

Go seek him out ; speak fair, and bring the body
Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this.
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Come, Gertrude, we 'll call up our wisest friends ;
And let them know, both what we mean to do,
And what 's untimely done : [so haply, slander]......
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter
As level as the cannon to his blank
Transports his poison'd shot, may miss our name
Hnd hit the woundless air. O, come away !
My soul is full of discord and dismay. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Another Room in the Castle.*
*Enter* HAMLET

*Ham.* Safely stowed.

*Ros.* / *Guil.* *[Within]* Hamlet ! Lord Hamlet.

*Hamlet.* But soft, what noise ? who calls on Hamlet ?
O, here they come.

*Enter* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

*Ros.* What have you done, my lord, with the dead body ?

*Ham.* Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

*Ros.* Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence
And bear it to the chapel.

*Ham.* Do not believe it.

*Ros.* Believe what ?

*Ham.* That I can keep your counsel and not mine own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge, what replication should be made by the son of a king ?

*Ros.* Take you me for a sponge, my lord ?

*Ham.* Ay, sir ; that soaks up the king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the king best service in the end : he keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw ; first mouthed, to be last swallowed : when he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

*Ros.* I understand you not, my lord.

*Ham.* I am glad of it : a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

*Ros.* My lord, you must tell us where the body is and go with us to the king.

Find out where he is, speak gently to him and bring the dead body into the chapel. Please, you should act quickly.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Come Gertrude, let us summon our wisest friends, and tell them what has happened, and what we purpose to do in the matter ; and so we may escape the dart of slander which always hits its object everywhere in the broad world as sure as a cannon-ball hits the target. Come away, my heart is torn by conflict and fear. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Another Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* HAMLET

*Ham.* The dead body safely put away.

*Ros.*
*Guil.* } [*Within*] Hamlet ! Lord Hamlet.

*Ham.* Who is shouting my name. Here they are coming.

*Enter* ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.

*Ros.* What have you done with the dead body, my lord ?

*Ham.* I have miked it with dust, for it is but dust.

*Ros.* Tell us where it is so that we may carry it to the chapel.

*Ham.* Do not believe it.

*Ros.* Believe what ?

*Ham.* That I can do what you counsel me, and not have my own way. When a sponge demands of me, what answer should be made by the son of a king ?

*Ros.* Do you take me for a sponge, my lord ?

*Ham.* Yes, sir. A sponge is one who sucks in the king's favour, rewards and authority. After all they render the king a good service. Like an ape munching nuts in his jaws, the king keeps them, and then squeezes out all information you have gathered, and sponge, you are dry again, and have no tales to tell.

*Ros.* I do not see the point, my lord.

*Ham.* I am glad to hear it ; flighty words make no sense to a foolish ear.

*Ros.* My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the king.

*Ham.* The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing—

*Guil.* A thing, my lord ?

*Ham.* Of nothing : bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after. [*Exeunt*

SCENE III. *Another Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* KING *attended.*

*King.* I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose !
Yet must not we put the strong law on him :
He 's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgement, but their eyes ;
And where 'tis so, the offender's scourge is weigh'd,
But never the offence.
To bear all smooth and even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause : diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all.

*Enter* ROSENCRANTZ

How now ! what hath befall'n ?

*Ros.* Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

*King.* But where is he ?

*Ros.* Without, my lord ; guarded, to know your pleasure.

*King.* Bring him before us.

*Ros.* Ho, Guildenstern ! bring in my lord.

*Enter* HAMLET *and* GUILDENSTERN.

*King.* Now, Hamlet, where 's Polonius ?

*Ham.* At supper.

*King.* At supper ! where ?

*Ham.* Not where he eats, but where he is eaten : a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet : we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots : your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table : that 's the end.

*King.* Alas, alas !

*Ham.* The body is with the king, but the king is with the body. The king is a thing—

*Guil.* A thing, my lord ?

*Ham.* A thing of nothing (*i. e.*, a creature of no worth); take me to him. Hide fox, and all after (*i. e.*, Polonius is the fox, and they are all to give the chase). [*Exeunt*

SCENE III. *Another Room in the Castle*

*Enter* KING, *attended*

*King.* I have sent men to find him, and to find the dead body. That this man is at liberty must be a source of danger yet he cannot be tried for murder. He is loved very much by the ignorant multitude whose choice is dictated, not by judgment, but by mere sense-impression. And in such a case the punishment of the offender is taken into consideration, and not the offence. To get round the difficut situation, it must appear that we have sent him away as the result of careful consideration. Diseases that seem to have gone beyond control must be treated by drastic remedies, or they should better be left alone.

*Enter* ROSENCRANTZ

Now, what has happened ?

*Ros.* My lord, we cannot persuade him to tell us where he has put away the dead body.

*King.* Where is he ?

*Ros.* My lord, he is in escort outside, waiting upon your pleasure.

*King.* Bring him before us.

*Ros.* Ho, Guildenstern ! bring in my lord.

*Enter* HAMLET *and* GUILDENTSTERN.

*King.* Now, Hamlet, where is Polonius ?

*Ham.* He is at supper.

*King* At supper ? Tell me where.

*Ham.* He is where he is being eaten, and not where he eats; certain crafty worms have met and fallen upon him.

The worm feeds like an emperor ; we fatten all creatures so that they may feed and fatten us, and we in our turn become the food of worms The well-fed king and the starving beggar serve the same purpose—they are food for worms—only two different courses. That is all.

*King.* Alas, alas !

*Ham.* A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

*King.* What dost thou mean by this?

*Ham.* Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.

*King.* Where is Polonius?

*Ham.* In heaven; send thither to see: if your messenger find him not there, seek him i' the other place yourself. But indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

*King.* Go seek him there. [*To some Attendants.*

*Ham.* He will stay till you come [*Exeunt Attendants.*

*King.* Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done, must send thee hence
With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;
The bark is ready and the wind at help,
The associates tend, and every thing is bent
For England.

*Ham.* For England?

*King.* Ay, Hamlet.

*Ham.* Good.

*King.* So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

*Ham.* I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for England! Farewell, dear mother.

*King.* Thy loving father Hamlet.

*Ham.* My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh, and so, my mother. Come, for England! [*Exit.*

*King.* Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard;
Delay it not: I 'll have him hence to-night:
Away! for every thing is seal'd and done
That else leans on the affair: pray you, make haste.
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

And, England; if my love thou hold'st at aught—
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword and thy free awe
Pays homage to us—thou mayst not coldly set
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,
By letters cangruing to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet.

*Ham.* A man may catch a fish with the worm that has fed on a king, and eat the very fish that has fed on the worm.

*King.* What do you mean by this ?

*Ham.* It is all but to show that a king may travel his way through the entrails of beggar.

*King.* Where is Polonius ?

*Ham.* He is in heaven. Send your messenger to seek him there ; if he does not find him there, you may look for him in hell.

If you do not find him within this month, you shall smell him as you go up the stairs to the lobby.

*King.* Go and seek him there. [*To some Attendants.*

*Ham.* He will be there until you go. [*Exeunt Attendants.*

*King.* Hamlet, after this deed which we regret so much, we must send you hence as quickly as possible in serious consideration of your personal safety. Make yourself ready. The ship is waiting, the wind favourable, your companions wait for you—all arrangements made for your voyage to England.

*Ham.* For England ?

*King.* Yes, Hamlet.

*Ham.* Good.

*King.* It is good indeed, if you knew our purpose.

*Ham.* There is an angel watching over me, and he must know what the purpose is. Well then, England ! Farewell, dear mother.

*King.* Give farewell to your loving father, Hamlet.

*Ham.* I say my mother ; father and mother are man and wife ; man and wife are but one flesh—so my mother will do for both father and mother. For England then ! [*Exit.*

*King.* Follow him close at heels, entice him to go aboard as quickly as possible. Waste no time. I must get him away to-night. Go ! Letters are sealed and everything is ready for the voyage. Make haste please.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

And, King of England, if you value my esteem as you have reason to do in fear of my great power since the wounds inflicted by the Danish sword have not yet healed and your homage spontaneously is offered from fear and reverence, you cannot indifferently set aside our decree, attested by letters, demanding that Hamlet should be immediately put to death.

Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me: till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun [*Exit*

## SCENE IV. *A Plain in Denmark.*

*Enter* FORTINBRAS, *a* Captain *and* Soldiers, *marching*.

*For.* Go, captain from me greet the Danish king;
Tell him that by his license Fortinbras
Craves the conveyance of a promised march.
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.
If that his majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye;
And let him know so.

*Cap.* I will do 't, my lord.

*For.* Go softly on.

[*Exeunt Fortinbras and Soldiers.*

*Enter* HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and others.*

*Ham.* Good sir, whose powers are these?

*Cap.* They are of Norway, sir.

*Ham.* How purposed, sir, I pray you?

*Cap.* Against some part of Poland.

*Ham.* Who commands them sir?

*Cap.* The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

*Ham.* Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,
Or for some frontier?

*Cap.* Truly to speak, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

*Ham.* Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

*Cap.* Yes it is already garrison'd.

*Ham.* Ten thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats
Will not debate the question of this straw:
This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.

*Cap.* God be wi' you, sir. [*Exit.*

*Ros.* Will 't please you go my lord?

Carry out the decree for like the hectic fever he oppresses me, and you must relieve me in any case. Whatever may happen, until it is done, I can have no joy in life. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV. *A Plain in Denmark.*

*Enter* FORTINBRAS, *a* CAPTAIN *and* SOLDIERS, *marching.*

*For.* Go Captain give my regards to the Danish King. Tell him that with his leave Fortinbras desires the passage of his troops through his territory. You know the place of our meeting. You may tell him that if his majesty desires anything of me, I shall call on him and pay him my respect.

*Cap.* I shall do it, my lord.

*For.* Let us proceed slowly. [*Exeunt Fortinbras and soldiers.*

*Enter* HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GULIDENSTERN, *and others.*

*Ham.* Good sir, whose troops are these ?

*Cap.* They are Norwegian troops, sir.

*Ham.* What are they intended for, I pray you, sir ?

*Cap.* They are proceeding against some part of Poland.

*Ham.* Who is in command of them, sir ?

*Cap.* Fortinbras, nephew to the old King of Norway.

*Ham.* Does the army march against the main land of Poland or some frontier ?

*Cap.* To tell the plain truth we are going to capture a small plot of land, which is not worthwhile, but for name ; even to pay five ducats, I would not take to farming it. Nor would it fetch more either to Norway or to Poland if it were sold.

*Ham.* The Poles are not likely then to defend it.

*Cap.* But the Poles have already fortified it.

*Ham.* Ten thousand men and twenty thousand ducats will not suffice nor settle this dispute over a small plot of land. Accumulation of wealth and long-continued peace produce this result ; it is like an abscess which works inside, showing no sign outside until the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.

*Cap.* Good-bye to you, sir. [*Exit.*

*Ros.* Will it please you proceed, my lord ?

*Ham.* I 'll be with you straight. Go a little before.
[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge ! What is a man.
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed ? a beast, no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event,—
A thought which, quarter'd hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward,—I do not know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing 's to do,'
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means,
To do 't. Examples gross as earth exhort me :
Witness this army, of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare
Even for an egg-shell.
Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour 's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twently thousand men,
That for a fantasy and trick of fame
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain ? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth ? [*Exit.*

SCENE V. *Elsinore. A Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* QUEEN, HORATIO, *and a* GENTLEMAN

*Queen.* I will not speak with her.

*Ham.* I shall join you straight. You may move on.

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

How all that I see and hear charges me with slothness and incites the motive of my revenge so slacking. What is a man if all that he has to do is to eat and sleep ? He is not more than a beast. God gave us reason, and we can think of the past and the future before acting ; the god-like reason was not certainly given us to grow mouldy by unuse. I do not know whether it is beast-like forgetfulness, or some timid, too scrupulous analysis of the effect or consequence of action, which shows much more of fear than wisdom. I still live to say that this (*i. e.*, revenge) remains to be accomplished, when I have the necessary incentive, will, strength and means to accomplish it. Very plain examples come as incitement to me. Take this big army, poised for attack ; led by a very young prince, who, filled with noble ambition, recks not of the result, and dares death for a tiny plot of land. It does not mean that to be really great one should not act unless one has a good and great cause ; it is to uphold one's honour, no matter how small the cause. Now let me examine my case. I have a father killed and a mother sullied—and it is an incitement to my reason and passion, but they are lying dormant. I am put to shame when I see twenty thousand men are going to sacrifice their lives—all for the vain allurement of fame—and they are going to fight for a piece of land which is too small for a standing space for them or for their graves. Henceforth I shall cherish only bloody thoughts. [*Exit.*

SCENE V. *Elsinore. A Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* QUEEN, HORATIO, *and a* GENTLEMAN.

*Queen.* I shall not speak with her.

*Gent.* She is importunate, indeed distract :
Her mood will needs be pitied.
*Queen.* What would she have ?
*Gent.* She speaks much of her father ; says she hears
There 's tricks i' the world and hems and beats her heart ;
Spurns enviously at straws ; speaks things in doubt,
That carry but half sense : her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection : they aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts ;
Which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,
Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.
*Hor.* 'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.
*Queen.* Let her come in. [*Exit Gentleman.*
[*Aside*] To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss :
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

*Re-enter* GENTLEMAN, *with* OPHELIA.

*Oph.* Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark ?
*Queen.* How now, Ophelia !
*Oph.* [*Sings*] How should I your true love know
From another one ?
By his cockle hat and staff
And his sandal shoon.
*Queen.* Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song ?
*Oph.* Say you ? ney, pray you, mark.
[*Sings*] He is dead gone, lady,
He is dead and gone ;
At his head a grass green turf,
At his heels a stone.
Oh, ho !
*Queen.* Nay, but Ophelia,—
*Oph.* Pray you, mark.
[*Sings*] White his shroud as the mountain snow,—

*Enter* KING.

*Queen.* Alas, look here, my lord.
*Oph.* [*Sings*] Larded with sweet flowers ;
Which bewept to the grave did go
With true-love showers.

*Gent*. She is so pressing and indeed crazy. One should pity the state she is in.

*Queen*. What does she want ?

*Gent*. She is talking always of her father. She says that she hears that there is treachery in the world, and then she will pause (as if thinking) and beat her heart ; is full of veritation ; she expresses a vague suspicion in all that she utters, which is not fully comprehensible. Her speech makes no sense ; yet those who hear her rambling words, gather some meaning—they at least try to hit at the meaning or construe the words to suit what they think ; her words, reinterpreted by her winks, shakings of head and gesticulations lead one to construct some meaning—though something vague, but charged with sadness.

*Hor*. It would be well if you spoke to her ; she might otherwise poison suspicious minds with speculation that might bode ill.

*Queen*. Let her come in. *[Exit Gentleman*

[*Aside*] Each trifle seems to be forerunner of a coming evil to a creature, afflicted with sin, for such is the case with a sinner. The suspicion with which a guilty mind is haunted, betrays it in the very act of concealment.

*Re-enter* GENTLEMAN *with* OPHELIA.

*Oph*. Where is the beautiful Queen of Denmark ?

*Queen*. How is it Ophelia !

*Oph*. [*Sings*] How am I to distinguish a true lover ? By his pligrim's hat and staff and sandal shoes.

*Queen*. Alas, sweet lady, what is the meaning of this song ?

*Oph*. You want to know it ? Please then note all that I say,

[*Sings*] He is dead and no more, lady. He is in his grave with a grassy sturf at his head and a stone at his feet. Oh, ho !

*Queen*. I do not see, Ophelia, what you mean—

*Oph*. Please attend.

[*Sings*] His shroud is as white as the mountain snow,—

*Enter* KING

*Queen*. Alas, look here, my lord.

*Oph*. [*Sings*] Smothered with sweet flowers which seemed to shed tears of true love as they were heaped on the grave.

*King.* How do you, pretty lady?

*Oph.* Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!

*King.* Conceit upon her father.

*Oph.* Pray you, let's have no words of this: but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

[*Sings*] To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.

*King.* Pretty Ophelia!

*Oph.* Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on 't.

*King.* How long hath she been thus?

*Oph.* I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i' the cold ground. My brother shall know of it: and so I thank you for your good counsel.—Come, my coach!—Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night. [*Exit.*

*King.* Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you. [*Exit Horatio.*

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions! First, her father slain:
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author
Of his own just remove: the people muddied,
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,
For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly,
In hugger-mugger to inter him: poor Ophelia
Divided from herself and her fair judgement,
Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts:
Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France.
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death;
Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,
Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,

*King.* How do you do, pretty lady ?

*Oph.* God requite you ! This is the story that a baker's daughter was turned into an owl. We know what we are, but do not know what may become of us. God bless your table !

*King.* She is still thinking of her father.

*Oph.* I pray you, let us talk no more of this; but when they ask you what it means, you may say this :

[*Sings*] Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day and early in the morning, I, a maid at your window, shall be your Valentine.

*King.* Pretty Ophelia !

*Oph.* Indeed, without any more ado, I shall finish it.

*King.* How long has she been in this state ?

*Oph.* I hope it will be all right soon. We need patience ; but I cannot but weep when I think that they should have put him into the cold ground. I must let my brother know of it ; and so I thank you for your good advice. My coach please ! Good night, ladies ; good night, good night. [*Exit*.

*King.* Attend her ; keep her under vigilance, I pray you. [*Exit Horatio.*

This is how grief has told upon her spirits, it is all due to her father's death. O Gertrude ! when sorrows come ; they come in a crowd. First, her father is slain ; next your son is gone and for his act of violence he has to be got out of the way ; the people are distracted by vague and ominous suspicions about the death of Polonius. We have but buried him in secret and in unseemly haste. Poor Ophelia has lost her reason, which means that she is no more a rational being. Last, but equally serious is the return of her brother in secret from France. He keeps his designs secret while his ears are assailed with mischievous reports of his father's death, serving to increase his amazement. And in this case, the actual facts being unknown, the confusing reports of Polonius's death, circulating will hrow the blame on us. O my dear Gertrude, all these

Like to a murdering-piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death. [*A noise within.*

*Queen.* Alack, what noise is this ?

*King.* Where are my Switzers ? Let them guard the door.

*Enter another* GENTLEMAN.

What is the matter ?

*Gent.* Save yourself, my lord :
The ocean, overpeering of his list,
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord ;
And, as the world were now but to begin,
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
The ratifiers and props of every word,
They cry 'Choose we ; Laertes shall be king !'
Caps, hands and tongues applaud it to the clouds,
'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king !'

*Queen.* How cheerfully on the false trail they cry !
O, this is counter, you false Danish dog !

[*Noise within.*

*King.* The doors are broke.

*Enter* LAERTES, *armed* ; DANES *following.*

*Laer.* Where is this king ? Sirs, stand you all without.

*Danes.* No, let 's come in.

*Laer.* I pray you, give me leave.

*Danes.* We will, we will. [*They retire without the door.*

*Laer.* I thank you : keep the door. O thou vile king,
Give me my father !

*Queen.* Calmly, good Laertes.

*Laer.* That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard;
Cries cuckold to my father ; brands the harlot
Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brows
Of my true mother.

*King.* What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like ?
Let him go, Gertrude ; do not fear our person :
There 's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed : let him go, Gertrude !
Speak, man.

happenings are more than murderous to me.

[*A noise within.*

*Queen.* Alas ! what noise is it that we hear ?

*King.* Where are my bodyguards ? Let them guard the door.

*Enter another* GENTLEMAN.

What is the matter ?

*Gent.* Look to your safety, my lord. The ocean does not more quickly submerge the low-lying lands near the shore by forcing its way than Laertes, at the head of a rebellious crowd, routs your officers. The crowd hail him as their master, and age-old custom and tradition which can give validity to a decision, being ignored, they cry, "We choose Laertes ; he shall be king." They throw their caps into the air, clap their hands and shout at the top of their voice, "Laertes, and none other shall be our king !"

*Queen.* How do they take up a wrong case. You wretched Danes, you are off your track ! [*Noise within.*

*King.* The doors have been forced.

*Enter* LAERTES *armed* ; Danes *following*.

*Laer.* Where is this king ? Gentlemen, please wait outside.

*Danes.* No, let us come in.

*Lear.* Let me get in along, please.

*Danes.* Yes, you get in. [*They retire within the door.*

*Laer.* I thank you : guard the door. O you hated king, I demand my father of you.

*Queen.* Be patient, good Laertes.

*Laer.* Cool blood will stigmatize me a bastard and my father a cuckold, and my mother a whore, who is otherwise an unblemished, chaste woman.

*King.* What is the cause, Laertes, that makes you break out into such portentous revolt ? Release him, Gertrude, you need have no fear about my personal self. Providence shields a king, and treason may intend but can do little harm to him. Tell me, Laertes, why you are so full of indignation. Release him Gertrude. Say what you have got against me.

*Laer.* Where is my father?
*King.* Dead.
*Queen.* But not by him.
*King.* Let him demand his fill.
*Laer.* How came he dead? I 'll not be juggled with:
To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation: to this point I stand,
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I 'll be revenged
Most thoroughly for my father.
*King.* Who shall stay you?
*Laer.* My will, not all the world:
And for my means, I 'll husband them so well,
They shall go far with little.
*King.* Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father's death, is 't writ in your revenge
That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe,
Winner and loser?
*Laer.* None but his enemies.
*King.* Will you know them then?
*Laer.* To his good friends thus wide I 'll ope my arms;
And, like the kind life-rendering pelican,
Repast them with my blood.
*King.* Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman.
That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensibly in grief for it,
It shall as level to your judgement pierce
As day does to your eye.
*Danes* [*Within*] Let her come in.
*Laer.* How now! what noise is that?

*Re-enter* OPHELIA.

O heat, dry up my brains! tears seven times salt,
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye!
By heaven, thy madness shall be paid with weight,
Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May!

*Laer.* Where is my father ?

*King.* Dead.

*Queen.* But the king had nothing to do with his death.

*King.* Let him ask all that he wants to know.

*Laer.* How did he come by his death ? I will not be trifled with. I throw overboard the oath of loyalty ! I discard conscience and mercy ! I do not mind risking salvation. I insist on this : I may lose this world and the next, no matter what happens ; I must have adequate revenge on my father's death.

*King.* There is none to prevent you.

*Laer.* Not all the world, except my will, can prevent it. As for my means, I shall so utilize them that they can be stretched the farthest.

*King.* Good Laertes, if you desire to know the truth about your father's death, is it a part of your revenge to net in both friend and foe like a gambler drawing all the stakes ?

*Laer.* My revenge aims at none but his enemies.

*King.* Do you want to know who these enemies are ?

*Laer.* His good friends I shall take to my bosom ; for them I shall shed my blood like the pelican feeding her young on her blood.

*King.* Now do you speak sensibly and like a true gentleman. I shall make as plain as daylight to you that I had nothing to do with your father's death and am most sincerely grieved by it.

*Danes.* [*Within*] Let her come in.

*Laer.* What is the noise about ?

*Re-enter* OPHELIA.

Let vehemence of grief dry up my brain and bitter tears extinguish my sight ! By God, I shall more than make up for your madness by revenge. O rose of May !

Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia !
O heavens ! is 't possible a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life ?
Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine
It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.

*Oph.* [*Sings*] They bore him barefaced on the bier :
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny :
And in his grave rain'd many a tear,—
Fare you well, my love !

*Laer.* Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,
It could not move thus.

*Oph.* [*Sings*] You must sing down a down,
And you call him a-down a,

O, how the wheel becomes it ! it is the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.

*Laer.* This nothing 's more than matter.

*Oph.* There 's rosemary, that 's for remembrance : pray you, love, remember : and there is pansies, that 's for thoughts.

*Laer.* A document in madness ; thoughts and remembrance fitted.

*Oph.* There 's fennel for you, and columbines : there 's rue for you : and here 's some for me : we may call it herb of grace o' Sundays : O, you must wear your rue with a difference. There 's a daisy : I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died : they say a' made a good end,—

[*Sings*] For bonnie sweet Robin is my joy.

*Laer.* Thought and affliction, passion hell itself,
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

*Oph.* [*Sings*] And will he not come again ?
And will he not come again ?
No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy death-bed,
He never will come again.
His beard was as white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll :
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan :
Go ha' mercy on his soul !

And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God we wi' you. [*Exit.*

Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia ! O God ! I wonder that a young maid's sense and intelligence should be as perishable as an old man's life ? Nature (filial love) is generous in its impulse, and sacrifices its most precious gift for the dear departed.

*Oph.* [*Sings*] They carried him on the bier, his face uncovered ; hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny ; tears streamed on his grave. Farewell, my sweet one.

*Laer.* Your sanity, if you had not lost it, could not have been so persuasive of revenge.

*Oph.* [*Sings*] You must sing down-a-down, if you call him a-down-a. Oh, how it suits the spinning wheel ! It is the false steward who stole his master's daughter.

*Laer.* While she talks no sense, it is more full of meaning.

*Oph.* There is rosemary, and it keeps one in remembrance ; remember me, love. There are pansies, and these give one thought.

*Laer.* Her madness is full of lesson, thoughts and remembrance matched together.

*Oph.* There is fennel (standing for flattery and deceit) for you, and the columbine (standing for faithlessness in marriage); there is rue (standing for sorrow or repentance) for you. Here is a flower for me ; it is called herb of grace on Sundays. You must wear it (rue) in a different sense. There is daisy (emblem of deceit). I should like to give you some violets (emblem of faithfulness) but they dried away where my father died. They say that he died in peace,—

[*Sings*] For beautiful sweet Robin is all my joy.

*Laer.* Whatever she puts into words, she touches with pathos and beauty—thought, sorrow, feeling, or the borror of hell.

*Oph.* [*Sings*] And will he not come again ? No, no, he is dead. Go to your grave. He will never come again. His beard was as white as snow ; his head was all grey. He is gone, he is gone. In vain we weep for him. May God have mercy on his soul ! May God have mercy on all Christian souls ! Good-bye. [*Exit.*

*Laer.* Do you see this, O God ?
*King.* Laertes, I must commune with your grief,
Or you deny me right. Go but apart
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me :
If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,
To you in satisfaction ; but if not,
Be you content to lend your patience to us
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.
*Laer.* Let this be so ;
His means of death, his obscure funeral,
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble rite nor formal ostentation,
Cry to be heard, as 't were from heaven to earth,
That I must call 't in question.
*King.* So you shall ;
And where the offence is let the great axe fall.
I pray you, go with me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. *Another Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* HORATIO *and a* SERVANT.

*Hor.* What are they that would speak with me ?
*Serv.* Sea-faring men, sir : they say they have letters for you.
*Hor.* Let them come in. [*Exit Servant.*
I do not know from what part of the world
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

*Enter* SAILORS

*First Sail.* God bless you, sir.
*Hor.* Let him bless thee too.

*First Sail.* He shall, sir, an 't please him. There 's a letter for you, sir ; it comes from the ambassador that was bound for England ; if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

*Hor.* [*Reads*] 'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this, give these fellows some means to the king : they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding our-

*Laer.* How can God keep silent on seeing this?

*King.* Laertes, I must bear a part in your grief—I have a right to do it, you should not deny that. Go by yourself; choose as you please those of your wisest friends, and let them hear and judge us both. If they find me guilty either directly or indirectly, I shall give up my kingdom, crown, life and all that is mine to give you satisfaction. If it is otherwise, bear patiently with me, and we shall collaborate so that you may have all satisfaction.

*Laer.* I accept your offer. How he came by death, why he was buried in secret, and no memorial—sword or shield—put up over his remains, and no pomp and ceremony attended his burial—all these demand inquiry—and I demand satisfaction.

*King.* So you shall have satisfaction; let chastisement come upon the offender. Please come with me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. *Another Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* HORATIO, *and a* SERVANT.

*Hor.* Who are the people that want to speak with me?

*Serv.* They are sailors, sir: they say they have letters for you.

*Hor.* Bring them in. [*Exit Servant.*

I do not know if anybody would write to me from any part of the world but Hamlet.

*Enter* SAILORS.

*First Sail.* God bless you, sir.

*Hor.* May God bless you too.

*First Sail.* God will, sir, if it please him. Here is a letter for you sir; it is from the ambassador, proceeding to England. I am told your name is Horatio.

*Hor.* [*Reads*] 'Horatio, when you have gone through this letter, let these fellows meet the king, they have letters for him. Before the second day of our voyage, pirates, fully armed, chased us. As we were slower in movement, we fought desperately

selves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple, I boarded them; on the instant they got clear of our ship; so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy: but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king have the letters I have sent; and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou would'st fly death I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England: of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell.

'He that thou knowes thine HAMLET.'

Come, I will make you way for these your letters:
And do 't the speedier, that you may direct me
To him from whom you brought them. (*Exeunt*

SCENE VII. *Another Room in the Castle.*
*Enter* KING *and* LAERTES.

*King.* No must your conscience my acquittance seal,
And you must put me in your heart for friend,
With you have heard, and with a knowing ear,
That he whieh hath your noble father slain
Pursued my life.
*Laer.* It well appears: but tell me
Why you proceeded not against these feats,
So crimeful and so capital in nature,
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,
You mainly were stirr'd up.
*King.* O, for two special reasons,
Which may to you perhaps seem much unsinew'd
But yet to me they are strong. The queen his mother
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself—
My virtue or my plague, be it either which—
She 's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her. The other motive,
Why to a public count I might not go,
Is the great love the general gender bear him;
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,
Convert his gyves to graces; so that my arrows,

when we were overtaken, and I happened to enter the pirate-ship. At once the ship sailed away, and I alone became the prisoner of the pirates. They have fairly treated me ; but they expect reward for their fair treatment of me. Let the king have my letters : and you should come straight to see me. I have some communication to make that will astound you ; words are too ineffective for what I have to whisper to your ear. The seamen will bring you where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are on their way to England ; I have much to tell you about them. Farewell. 'I am yours, Hamlet.'

Come, I shall quickly bring you to the king, and then you can take me to him from whom you brought these letters.

## SCENE VII. *Another Room in the Castle.*

*Enter* KING and LAERTES.

*King*. Now your conscience must confirm my innocence and you must take me as your sincere friend, since you have heard me, and you are intelligent enough to understand that he who has killed your father, was after me.

*Laer*. It is plain to me now. But tell me why you let him off, while his acts were so criminal and fatal, as your own safety, prudence and other considerations demanded his punishment.

*King*. There were two special reasons ; they may seem weak to you, and for me they were not to set aside. The queen, his mother, dotes on him. As for myself, whether it is my virtue, or my misfortune, she is closely knit up, with me that as the star keeps in its orbit so do I in the ambit of her love. The other reason why he was not tried in public, is the great love that people have for him. They overlook his faults in their affection for him, and like the spring that turns wood to stone, they convert his faults into virtues. So any attempt on my part

Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,
Would have reverted to my bow again.
And not where I had aim'd them.

*Laer.* And so have I a noble father lost:
A sister driven into desperate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections; but my revenge will come.

*King.* Break not your sleeps for that: you must not think
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull
That we can let our beard be shook with danger
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more:
I loved your father, and we love ourself;
And that, I hope will teach you to imagine—

*Enter a* Messenger, *with letters.*

How now! what news?

*Mess.* Letters, my lord, from Hamlet.
This to your majesty; this to the queen.

*King.* From Hamlet! who brought them?

*Mess.* Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not:
They were given me by Claudio; he received them
Of him that brought them.

*King.* Laertes, you shall hear them.
Leave us. [*Exit Messenger.*
[*Reads*] 'High and mighty. You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes; when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return. HAMLET'
What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

*Laer.* Know you the hand?

*King.* 'Tis Hamlet's character. 'Naked'
And in a postscript here, he says 'alone'.
Can you advise me?

*Laer.* I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come;
It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
'Thus didst thou.'

*King.* If it be so Laertes—
As how should it be so? how otherwise?—
Will you be ruled by me?

to bring him to public trial, like an arrow too light in flight against a strong wind, would have come to nought—and might have endangered my position.

*Laer.* And as a result I have lost a noble father, and a sister has been driven mad, whose virtue and excellence, if I may praise what has been, and is now no more, stood paramount in the age. But I am not renouncing my revenge.

*King.* You need not disturb your sleep for that. You must not think that I am dull and inert in spirit, and dismiss lightly any liberties taken with danger to myself. You will soon know more. I loved your father, and I have a regard for myself, and this, let me hope, will make it plain to you—

*Enter a* Messenger, *with letters.*

Yes, what is the news ?

*Mess.* Here are letters, my lord, from Hamlet. This is for your majesty ; this, for the queen.

*King.* Letters from Hamlet ! Who brought them ?

*Mess.* They say, my lord, that sailors brought them. I did not meet them.

They were given me by Claudio ; he received them from him who brought them.

*King.* Laertes, I shall read the letters to you. Leave us.

[*Exit Messenger.*

[*Reads*] 'Your majesty. Let me inform you that I am alone put ashore in your territory. I desire your permission to present myself before you to-morrow, when I shall, if you permit me, narrate the circumstances of my sudden and strange return. Hamlet'.

What should it mean ? Have others come back ? Or is it some fraud, and not what it appears ?

*Laer.* Do you know the handwriting ?

*King.* It is Hamlet's handwriting 'Alone', he adds. Can you tell me what it can be ?

*Laer.* I am perplexed, my lord. But let him come. It brings warmth of comfort to my sick heart, and I shall have pleasure to cast in his teeth, "You foully murdered my father."

*King.* If it is the fact, Laertes,—but I do not know how it can be the fact or otherwise, will you go by my advice ?

*Laer.* Ay, my lord;
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

*King.* To thine own peace. If he be now return'd,
As checking at his voyage, and that he means
No more to undertake it, I will work him
To an exploit now ripe in my device,
Under the which he shall not chose but fall:
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe;
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice,
And call it accident.

*Laer.* My lord, I will be ruled;
The rather, if you could devise it so
That I might be the organ.

*King.* It falls right.
You have been talk'd of since your travel much,
And that in Hamlet hearing, for a quality
Wherein, they say, you shine: your sum of parts
Did not together pluck such envy from him,
As did that one, and that in my regard
Of the unworthiest siege.

*Laer.* What part is that, my lord?

*King.* A very riband in the cap of youth
Yet needful too; for youth no less becomes
The light and careless livery that wears
Than settled age his sables and his weeds
Importing health and graveness. Two months since,
Here was a gentleman of Normandy:—
I've seen myself, and served against the French,
And they can well on horseback: but this gallant
Had witchcraft in 't; he grew unto his seat,
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse
As had he been incorpsed and demi-natured
With the brave beast: so far he topp'd my thought
That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks,
Come short of what he did.

*Laer.* A Norman was 't?

*King.* A Norman.

*Laer.* Upon my life, Lamond.

*King.* The very same.

*Laer.* I know him well: he is the brooch indeed
And gem of all the nation.

*Laer.* Yes, my lord, if you do not persuade me to make my peace with him.

*King.* I shall advise a course of action that will give you peace of mind. If he has returned now, his voyage being cut short and does not want to resume it, I shall set him on to a feat, a device full-grown in my mind, and he cannot but perish in it. For his death none can be blamed ; even his mother will suspect no foul play, and think that it is an accident.

*Laer.* My lord, I shall act according to your advice, if you can so arrange that he dies at my hands.

*King.* It shall be as you desire. You have been much praised, since you have travelled, in Hamlet's presence, for a distinguishing quality of yours. All your accomplishments taken together did not draw such envy from him as did that single quality, which counts the least in my opinion.

*Laer.* What quality is that, my lord ?

*King.* It is a sort of embellishment for a young man ; yet it is not to be scorned, for the light clothes that a young man wears, careless of his health, suits him as much the black clothes that an old man wears, so careful of his health and gravity. Two months ago, here was a gentleman from Normandy,—I have seen the French, and fought against them, and I can bear witness that they are excellent horsemen ; but this fine gentleman showed wonderful skill in horsemanship ; firmly seated on the back of his horse, he manoeuvred his horse with such marvellous skill that he seemed to be one in body and nature with the horse. He so far surpassed all that I could imagine that whatever feats I attempted, I was far behind him.

*Laer.* Was it a Norman ?

*King.* Yes, a Norman.

*Laer.* To be sure, it is Lamond.

*King.* That was the man.

*Laer.* I know him well. He is the pride and glory of the nation.

*King.* He made confession of you,
And gave you such a masterly report,
For art and exercise in your defence,
And for your rapier most especially,
That he cried out, 't would be a sight indeed
If one could match you : the scrimers of their nation,
He swore, had neither motion, guard, nor eye,
If you opposed them.
Sir, this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy
That he could nothing do but wish and beg
Your sudden coming o'er, to play with him.
Now, out of this—

*Laer.* What out of this, my lord ?

*King.* Laertes, was your father dear to you ?
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart ?

*Laer.* Why ask you this ?

*King.* Not that I think you did not love your father,
But that I know love is begun by time.
And that I see, in passages of proof,
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.
There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it ;
And nothing is at a like goodness still,
For goodness, growing to a plurisy,
Dies in his own too much : that we would do
We should do when we would ; for this 'would' changes
And hath abatements and delays as many
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents,
And then this 'should' is like a spendthrift sigh,
That hurts by easing. But, to the quick o' the ulcer :
Hamlet comes back : what would you undertake,
To show yourself your father's son in deed
More than in words ?

*Laer.* To cut his throat i' the church.

*King.* No place indeed should murder sanctuarize ;
Revenge should have no bounds. But good Laertes,
Will you do this—keep close within your chamber ?
Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home :

*King*. He admitted to have known you, and spoke highly of your skill in fencing, and exclaimed in enthusiasm that it would be worth seeing if you could be matched. He said that the fencers of his country could have no chance against you in attack or parrying or precision of thrust.

Sir, what he reported of your skill in fencing made Hamlet envious beyond measure, and he wished and prayed that you should come back to give him a chance of fencing with you. Now out of this,—

*Laer*. What have you in mind, my lord ?

*King*. Laertes, did you indeed love your father ? Are you making a show of grief, which your face expresses, but your heart does not feel ?

*Laer*. Why do you ask this ?

*King*. I do not suggest that you did not love your father. What I think is that love starts in course of time and that time tests love, wit the result that it may wane. The flame of love burns out of itself. Nothing keeps good always ; goodness itself, running into excess, dies of very surfeit. We should accomplish all that we will—and that without any delay. This will of ours changes, and suffers weakening and delays as it comes up against the will and resistance of others, against accidents. Then we waste ourselves on sighing that we have not done what we should have done ; it may give us some relief, but is hurtful to conscience. But to return to what is a sure point with us, Hamlet is coming back. What would you do to prove that your love for your father is a matter of action, and not of words only ?

*Lear*. I would cut his throat in the church.

*King*. No place can be permitted to give asylum to a murderer. No limitation should be placed upon revenge. But, good Laertes, I beg you to do this—keep your own room and do not go out. When Hamlet returns, he will learn that you

We 'll put on those shall praise your excellence
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you ;
Bring you in fine together
And wager on your heads : he, being remiss,
Most generous and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils, so that with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice
Requite him for your father.

*Laer.* I will do 't ;
And for that purpose I 'll anoint my sword.
I bought an unction of mountebank,
So mortal that but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death
That is but scratch'd withal ; I 'll touch my point
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.

*King.* Let 's further think of this :
Weigh what convenience both of time and means
May fit us to our shape : if this should fail,
And that our drift look through our bad performance,
'Twere better not assay'd : therefore this project
Should have a back or second, that might hold,
If this did blast in proof. Soft ! let me see :
We 'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings :
I ha' 't :
When in your motion you are hot and dry—
As make your bouts more violent to that end—
And that he calls for drink, I 'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce ; whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,
Our purpose may hold there. But stay, what noise ?

*Enter* QUEEN

How now, sweet queen !

*Queen.* One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow : your sister 's drown'd, Laertes.

are back in Denmark. We shall set some people praising your skill in fencing, and outbidding the fame that the Frenchman credited you with.

We shall finally bring you together and bet on the chances of your fencing. He, being careless, free from suspicions and foul play, will not care to look at the rapiers so that with little difficulty or a sleight of hand you can pick up an unblunted sword, and drive it home and he is finished and your revenge is accomplished.

*Laer.* I shall follow the plan. To make it more effective, I shall poison my sword. I bought an ointment of a quack-doctor ; it is so deadly that a scratch made by a knife, dipped in the poison, will not be cured by any plaster, made from herbs collected under the benign influence of the moon, and kill the man in question. I shall tip the point of the sword with the poison, and if I but scratch him, he will surely die.

*King.* We shall give further consideration to the matter, and find out how time and means can be convenient to us to carry out the plan. If time and means are not convenient, and their is the risk of bungling, the plan should better not be attempted. This plan should be a secondary one which will make good if the other miscarries. A minute please, and let me see how it works out. We shall have a large bet on your skill in fencing. The plan is coming all right. When you get heated and thirsty by your feat—see that you work yourself to that end—and he calls for a drink, I shall have a cup ready for him. A sip of it will be the end of him if he escapes the poisoned sword. What noise do I hear ?

*Enter* QUEEN

What is the matter, Queen ?

*Queen.* One calamity comes in the wake of another, there being no respite. Your sister is drowned, Laertes.

Softened Nature of the Queen.



*Laer.* Drown'd ! O, where ?

*Queen.* There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream :
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of clove-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them :
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hand, an envious silver broke ;
When down her weedly trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like a while they bore her up
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and induced
Unto that element : but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

*Laer.* Alas, then she is drown'd !

*Queen.* Drown'd, drown'd.

*Laer.* Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears : but yet
It is our trick ; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will, when these are gone,
The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord :
I have a speech of fire that fain would blaze,
But that this folly douts it. [*Exit.*

*King.* Let 's follow, Gertrude :
How much I had to do to calm his rage !
Now fear I this will give it start again :
Therefore let 's follow. [*Exeunt.*

## ACT V

### SCENE I. *A Churchyard.*

*Enter two* Clowns, *with spades, etc.*

*First Clo.* Is she to be buried in Christain burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation ?

*Laer.* Drowned ! where in she drowned ?

*Queen.* There is a willow drooping by a river, its silver leaves being reflected in the stream. She came there, bearing garlands of clove-flowers, nettles, daisies, long purples to which foul-mouthed shepherds give a vulgar name, but which are called dead men's fingers by our chaste maidens. In climbing the willow branches to hang the garlands on them, she broke one of the branches, and dropped, garlands and all, into the murmuring stream. Her clothes spread out, and kept her floating like a mermaid for a while, while she kept singing some old tune, insensible to the risk she ran, or like a creature to whom water is a natural habitude. Finally, her garments, heavily laden with water, dragged her down, singing to the bottom.

*Laer.* Alas, she is drowned !

*Queen.* Drowned, drowned.

*Laer.* The water has covered you over, poor Ophelia, and therefore, I add no more to it by my tears. But nature must have her way, with which we have to reckon—and I do not feel the shame of shedding tears ; when these (*i. e*., tears), are gone, the womanly weakness in me will be over too. Farewell, my lord. A fiery speech that would have burst from me, is drowned in tears.

*King.* Let us follow, Gertrude, I had so much to do to allay the fury of his anger. Now I am afraid, it will break out again. Let us follow him. [*Exeunt.*

## ACT V

### SCENE I. *A Churchyard.*

*Enter two* Clowns, *with spades, etc.*

*First Clo.* Is she to be buried according to Christian rites when she has put an end to her life ?

*Sec. Clo.* I tell thee she is ; and therefore make her grave straight : the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

*First Clo.* How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence ?

*Sec. Clo.* Why, 'tis found so.

*First Clo.* It must be 'se offendendo' ; it cannot be else, For here lies the point ; if I drown myself witingly, it argues an act : and an act hath three branches ; it is, to act, to do, to perform : argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

*Sec. Clo.* Nay, but here you, goodman delver.

*First Clo.* Give me leave. Here lies the water ; good : here stands the man ; good ; if the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he nill he, he goes ; mark you that ; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself : argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

*Sec. Clo.* But is this law ?

*First Clo.* Ay, Marry, is 't crowner's quest law.

*Sec. Clo.* Will you ha' the truth on 't ? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

*First Clo.* Why, there thou say'st ; and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their Christian.

Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers and grave-makers : they hold up Adam's profession.

*Sec. Clo.* Was he a gentleman ?

*First Clo.* A' was the first that ever bore arms.

*Sec. Clo.* Why, he had none.

*First Clo.* What, art a heathen ? How dost thou understand the Scripture ? The Scripture says Adam digged : could he dig without arms ? I 'll put another question to thee if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself—

*Sec. Clo.* Go to.

*First Clo.* What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter ?

*Sec. Clo.* The gallows-maker ; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

*Sec. Clo.* Yes, she is. Therefore, dig her grave straightway. The coroner has held an inquest on her, and admits her to Christian burial.

*First Clo.* How can that be if she had not drowned herself in self-protection ?

*Sec. Clo.* It is the coroner's judgment.

*First Clo.* It must be then, as I say, a case of killing herself in self-defence. Let me explain : if I drown myself with my knowledge, it is a conscious action ; an action has three parts—acting, doing, performing : therefore she drowned herself with her knowledge.

*Sec. Clo.* Listen to me, good digger.

*First Clo.* Let me finish, please. Here lies the water ; well, here stands the man ; now if the man gets into the water, and drowns himself, it cannot be denied that he drowns himself (an act of suicide). Note it carefully. If the water comes flooding and drowns him, he is not guilty of drowning himself ; therefore, he who is not guilty of his own death, does not commit suicide

*Sec. Clo.* But is that the law ?

*First Clo.* Yes, it is the coroner's inquest law.

*Sec. Clo.* Shall I tell you the actual truth. If she had not been a gentlewoman, she would have been denied Christian burial.

*First Clo.* That 's right. It is a great pity that great people should have liberty to drown or hang themselves more than their fellow Christians.

Let me take up my spade, and mind my business. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers and grave-diggers; they keep up Adam's profession.

*Sec. Clo.* Was Adam a gentleman ?

*First Clo.* He was the first gentleman to bear arms.

*Sec. Clo.* We have never heard of Adam bearing arms.

*First. Clo.* You must be a heathen (non-Christian). You do not understand the Bible. The Bible says that Adam dug. Could Adam dig without arms ? I shall put another question to you, and if you cannot answer it correctly, confess your self—

*Sec. Clo.* Stop !

*First Clo.* Who builds stronger than a mason, shipwright, or a carpenter ?

*Sec. Clo.* The gallows-maker ; for the pole he sets up serves for a thousand culprits.

*First Clo.* I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows does well; but how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now, thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church: argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To 't again, come.

*Sec. Clo.* 'Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright or a carpenter?'

*First Clo.* Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

*Sec. Clo.* Marry, now I can tell.

*First Clo.* To 't.

*Sec. Clo.* Mass I cannot tell.

*Enter* HAMLET *and* HORATIO, *afar off.*

*First Clo.* Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating, and when you are asked this question next, say 'a grave-marker'; the houses that he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan; fetch me a stoup of liquor.

[*Exit Sec. Clown.*

[*He digs, and sings.*

In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To contract, Oh! the time for—Ah! my behove,
O, methought, there-a was nothing-a meet.

*Ham.* Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?

*Hor.* Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

*Ham.* 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

*First Clo.* [*Sings*] But age, with his stealing steps,
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,
And hath shipped me intil the land,
As if I had never been such.

[*Throws up a skull.*

*Ham.* That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder! It might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o'erreaches; one that would circumvent God, might it not?

*Hor.* I might, my lord

*First Clo.* I appreciate your wit really. The gallows is all right. But how does it good ? It does good to those who do ill. Now you do ill to say that the gallows is built stronger than the church ; therefore, the gallows may do a good service to you. Have another try.

*Sec. Clo.* 'Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter ?'

*First Clo.* Yes, tell me that and have done with it.

*Sec. Clo.* Yes, indeed, I can tell you that.

*First Clo.* Come on.

*Sec. Clo.* Sorry, I cannot surely answer the question.

*Enter* HAMLET *and* HORATIO, *afar off.*

*First Clo.* You need not any more beat about it ; for you have the brains of an ass, which cannot improve by any use. When the question is next put to you, say that it is a grave-digger. The houses of the dead last till the day of judgment. Go to Yaughan, and bring me a cup of wine. [*Exit Sec. Clown.*

[*He digs, and sings.*

In youth when I was in love, it was so sweet ; then to marry, but now I realize it was not the right thing to do.

*Ham.* Is this fellow heartless when he can sing while he is engaged in digging a grave ?

*Hor.* It is habit that makes it so easy for him.

*Ham.* You are right. Delicate sensibility cannot go with course manual work.

*First Clo.* [*Sings*]. But old age has come upon me unawares, and if I have been shoved into the land as if I had never been a living creature. [*Throws up a skull.*

*Ham.* It is a skull now, but once it could speak and sing. The fellow now knocks it about, as if it were the jaw-bone of an ass, with which Cain did the first murder. It might be the head of a schemer, and this fellow now makes nothing of it. The schemer might play the rogue with God, could he not ?

*Hor.* Yes, indeed.

*Ham.* Or of a courtier, which could say 'Good morrow, sweet lord ! How dost thou, sweet lord ?' This might be my lord such-a one, that praised my lord such-a one's horse, when he meant to beg it : might it not ?

*Hor.* Ay, my lord.

*Ham.* Why, e'en so : and now my Lady Worm's : capless and knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade : here 's fine revolution, and we had the trick to see 't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with 'em ? mine ache to think on 't.

*First Clo.* [*Sings*] A pick-axe, and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding sheet :
O, a pit of clay for to be made,
For such a guest is meet.
[*Throws up another skull.*

*Ham.* There 's another : why may not that be the skull of a lawyer ? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks ? Why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about she sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery ? Hum ! This fellow might be in 's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries : is this the fine of his fines and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt ? will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures ? The very conveyance of his lands will hardly lie in this box ; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha ?

*Hor.* Not a jot more, my lord.

*Ham.* Is not parchment made of sheep-skins ?

*Hor.* Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

*Ham.* They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave 's this, sirrah ?

*First Clo.* Mine sir.
[*Sings*] O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

*Ham.* I think it be thine indeed, for thou liest in 't.

*First Clo.* You lie out on 't, sir, and therefore 'tis not yours : for my part, I do not lie in 't, and yet it is mine.

*Ham.* It might be the skull of a courtier. He could say, "Good morning, sweet lord ! How do you do, sweet lord ?" He might have been such and such a lord who praised the horse of another such lord when he had a purpose to make the horse his own. What do you think ?

*Hor.* It might be, my lord.

*Ham.* So it might be. Now my Lady Worm is in possession of it. It is jawless and is knocked about with the grave-digger's spade. What a change it has been through, if we had the intelligence to follow it ? Now these bones are knocked about as things to play with, but how costly must have been their upbringing while they were alive !

*First Clo.* [*Sings*] A pick-axe, and a spade, and a shroud too. And it proper to make a grave to receive the guest.

[*Throws up another skull.*

*Ham.* Here is another skull. Might it not be the skull of a lawyer ? His legal subtleties and quibbles, his cases, terms of tenure, his shifts are gone with him.

Now he lets a dirty fellow knock his head about with a dirty shovel, and he does not bring a charge of assault against him. Well, this fellow might have been in his time a great buyer of land, and had to deal with bonds, legal documents confirming a debt, fees paid by a tenant in order to transfer his land, witnesses, affirming the tenant's title to the land, the transfer of entailed land. This is the end he meets with—his clever head now filled with dust. Scraps of paper are all that is left of his right to the lands purchased. The heaps of legal documents, confirming transfer of lands, cannot have room in his coffin, for the possessor of land has no more than a coffin.

*Hor.* Yes, that is true, my lord.

*Ham.* Is not parchment made of sheep-skins ?

*Hor.* Yes, my lord, of sheep skins and calf-skins too.

*Ham.* They are fools (might be called sheep and calves) who depend on the these documents. I shall address this fellow. Whose grave is this, my dear fellow ?

*First Clo.* It is mine, sir. [*Sings*] Oh, for a grave to be made to receive a guest.

*Ham.* It is indeed thine for you lie (tell a lie) in this (in this matter).

*First Clo.* You are not inside the grave, and so it is not yours. As for myself, I do not lie in it ; yet it is mine.

*Ham.* Thou dost lie in 't, to be in 't and say it is thine : 'tis for the dead, not for the quick ; therefore thou liest.

*First Clo.* 'Tis a quick lie, sir ; 't will away again, from me to you.

*Ham.* What man dost thou dig it for ?

*First Clo.* For no man, sir.

*Ham.* What woman then ?

*First Clo.* For none neither.

*Ham.* Who is to be buried in 't ?

*First Clo.* One that was a woman, sir ; but rest her soul, she 's dead.

*Ham.* How absolute the knave is ! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have taken note of it ; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe. How long hast thou been a grave-maker ?

*First Clo.* Of all the days i' the year, I came to 't that day that our last King Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras.

*Ham.* How long is that since ?

*First Clo.* Cannot you tell that ? every fool can tell that : it was that very day that young Hamlet was born : he that is mad, and sent into England.

*Ham.* Ay, marry ; why was he sent into England ?

*First Clo.* Why because a' was mad : a' shall recover his wits there ; or, if a' do not, 'tis no great matter.

*Ham.* Why ?

*First Clo.* 'Twill not be seen in him there ; there the men are as mad as he.

*Ham.* How came he mad ?

*First Clo.* Very strangely, they say.

*Ham.* How 'strangely' ?

*First Clo.* Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

*Ham.* Upon what ground ?

*First Clo.* Why, here in Denmark : I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

*Ham.* How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot ?

*Ham.* You do lie (tell a lie) in this, when you mean to be inside the grave, and claim that it is yours.

*First Clo.* It is a quick lie, sir ; therefore, it may shift from me to you.

*Ham.* What man do you dig it for ?

*First Clo.* For no man, sir.

*Ham.* For what woman then ?

*First Clo.* For no woman either.

*Ham.* Who is to be buried in it ?

*First Clo.* One who was a woman, sir ; but she is dead. May her soul rest in peace !

*Ham.* The fellow is very meticulous ! We must speak very precisely or we shall be undone by ambiguity. By God, Horatio, for these three years I have noticed that people have grown very fastidious in expression, and a peasant may hold his own with a courtier. How long have you been a grave-maker ?

*First Clo.* I have been one since the day that our late King Hamlet defeated Fortinbras.

*Ham.* How long is it ?

*First Clo.* Cannot you tell that ? Every fool knows it. It was the very day that young Hamlet was born—he who has gone mad, and has been sent to England.

*Ham.* Well, why was he sent to England ?

*First Clo.* Because he was mad. He will get back his sanity in England, or if he does not, it does not matter.

*Ham.* Why ?

*First Clo.* In England, no one will know him to be mad ; there the man are as mad as he.

*Ham.* How did he become mad ?

*First Clo.* In a strange manner, they say.

*Ham.* How in a strange manner ?

*First Clo.* Indeed, with losing his sanity.

*Ham.* On what ground did he lose his sanity ?

*First Clo.* Why, here in Denmark. I have been a grave-maker here from boyhood these thirty years.

*Ham.* How long will a man lie in the earth without decaying ?

*First Clo.* I' faith, if a' be not rotten before a' die—as we have many corses now-a-days, that will scarce hold the laying in —a' will last you some eight year or nine year : a tanner will last you nine year.

*Ham.* Why he more than another ?

*First Clo.* Why, sir his hide is so tanned with his trade that a' will keep out water a great while ; and your water is a sore decayer of your wretched dead body. Here 's a skull now : this skull has lain in the earth three and twenty years.

*Ham.* Whose was it ?

*First Clo.* A foolish mad fellow's it was ; whose do you think it was ?

*Ham.* Nay, I know not.

*First Clo.* A pestilence on him for a made rogue ! a' poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

*Ham.* This ?

*First Clo.* E'en that.

*Ham.* Let me see. [*Takes the skull*] Alas, poor Yorick ! I knew him, Horatio : a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy, he hath borne me on his back a thousand times ; and now how abhorred in my imagination it is ! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now ? your gambols ? your songs ? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own graining ? quite chop-fallen ? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come ; make her laugh at that Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

*Hor.* What 's that, my lord.

*Ham.* Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth ?

*Hor.* E'en so.

*Ham.* And smelt so ? pah ! [*Puts down the skull.*

*Hor.* E'en so, my lord.

*Ham.* To what base uses we may return, Horatio ! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he finds it stopping a bung-hole ?

*Hor.* 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

*First Clo.* Indeed if he is not already wasted before he dies—as we have many dead bodies nowa daysthat will scarcely bear to be put into the grave—he will last some eight or nine years. A tanner will last nine years.

*Ham.* Why will a tanner last more than another?

*First Clo.* Because his skin is tanned by his occupation, and for a long time it will be impervious to water. Water does much to waste the dead body. Here is a skull; it has lain in the earth for twenty-three years.

*Ham.* Whose was it?

*First Clo.* It was the skull of a foolish mad fellow. Whose skull do you think it was?

*Ham.* I do not know.

*First Clo.* I curse him for being a mad rogue. He poured a bottle of Rhenish wine on my head once. This skull, sir, was Yorick's—he was the king's jester.

*Ham.* This the skull of Yorick?

*First Clo.* Even it is so.

*Ham.* Let me see [*Takes the skull*]. Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio. He was a man of great wit—had no end of jokes, and possesssed liveliest fancy. He had borne me on his back many a time. Now how revolting his skull is to my mind—it makes me sick. Here hung those lips I have kissed so often. Where are your taunts now, your pranks, your songs, your sallies of wit that set everybody at the table laughing? No taunt of yours to be thrown at the grinning skull! No lower jaw there! Now go to my lady's room, and tell her that however heavily she may paint herself, her fate will be the same—a grinning skull; excite her mirth by this. Tell me one thing Horatio I pray you.

*Hor.* What is it, my lord?

*Ham.* Do you think that Alexander looked like this after mingling with the earth?

*Hor.* That is even so.

*Ham.* Did he smell like this? What a smell!

[*Puts down the skull.*

*Hor.* It is indeed so, my lord.

*Ham.* To what a vile state death may bring us, Horatio! May we not, by means of our imagination, follow the changes that the great Alexander had undergone after his death, till we find his dust stopping the hole of a beer-barrel?

*Hor.* It would be taking a too fanciful view of the matter.

*Ham.* No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough and likelihood to lead it: as thus; Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!
But soft! but soft! aside: here come the king.

*Enter* Priests, *etc., in procession; the corpse of* OPHELIA, LAERTES *and* Mourners *following*: KING, QUEEN, *their trains, etc.*

The queen, the courtiers; who is this they follow?
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken
The corpse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo it own life: 't was of some estate.
Couch we awhile, and mark. [*Retiring with Horatio.*

*Laer.* What ceremony else?

*Ham.* That is Laertes, a very noble youth: mark.

*Laer.* What ceremony else?

*First Priest* Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warranty: her death was doubtful;
And but that great command o'ersways the order,
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the trumpet: for charitable prayers,
Shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her;
Yet here she is allow'd her virgin crants
Her maiden strewments and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

*Laer.* Must there no more be done?

*First Priest.* No more be done:
We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

*Laer.* Lay her i' the earth:
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling

*Ham.* No, not at all. We can trace the changes to that stage without stretching our fancy and credulity. Let me elaborate the point; Alexander died; he was buried; he mingled with dust; the dust is earth; and the earth yields muddy soil of clay, sand, animal and vegetable matter. Might they not stop a hole in a beer-barrel with that muddy soil to which Alexander was reduced?

The dreaded Caesar, dead and made into clay, might stop a hold to shut out the wind. Oh, that this creature of dust, who inspired fear and respect in people, should ultimately fill in a gap in the wall to keep off the wintry blasts! But hush! Let us step aside. Here comes the king.

*Enter* Priests, *etc., in procession*; *the corpse of* OPHELIA, LAERTES and MOURNERS *following*; KING, QUEEN, *their trains, etc.*

Here are the queen and the courtiers. Whose dead body are they following with incomplete funeral rites? It indicates that the person died by violent means—a case of self-destruction. It must be a person of position. Let us keep in the background and observe what goes on. [*Retiring with Horatio.*

*Laer.* Is there to be any other funeral rite?

*Ham.* That is Laertes, a noble young man. Watch the scene.

*Laer.* Any other funeral rite?

*First Priest.* Her funeral rites have been as far stretched as permissible. The manner of her death was open to suspicion. If the king had not set aside the Church-right, she would have been buried in unconsecrated ground, and remained there till the day of judgment; in place of prayers for the repose of the departed, potsherds, flints, pebbles should be flung at her. Yet she has been allowed garlands, to which a maiden who dies, is entitled, the strewing of flowers over her grave—in fact she has been granted the rites of Christian burial—the passing bell and burial in consecrated ground.

*Laer.* No other ceremony will be conceded?

*First Priest.* We can do no further ceremony. To sing a mass for the rest of the departed soul to one who died a self-inflicted death would be desecrating the burial service.

*Laer.* Lay her in the earth. May violets bloom upon her, an innocent and unstained maiden as she was! I tell you, unmannerly priest, my sister will be an angel to watch over you and tend you while you lie groaning and shrieking in hell.

*Ham.* What, the fair Ophelia!
*Queen.* [*Scattering flowers*] Sweets to the sweet: farewell!
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;
I thought thy bride bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
And not have strew'd thy grave.
*Laer.* O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of! Hold off the earth a while,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms:
[*Leaps into the grave.*
Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead
Till of this flat a mountain you have made
To o'ertop old Pelion or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.

*Ham.* [*Advancing*] What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars and makes them stand
Like wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane. [*Leaps into the grave.*
*Laer.* The devil take thy soul. [*Grappling with him.*
*Ham.* Thou pray'st not well.
I prithee, take thy fingers from throat;
For, though I am not splenitive and rash,
Yet have I in me something dangerous,
Which let thy wisdom fear. Hold off thy hand.
*King.* Pluck them asunder.
*Queen.* Hamlet, Hamlet!
*All.* Gentlemen—
*Hor.* Good my lord, be quiet.
[*The Attendants part them, and they come out of the grave.*
*Ham.* Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.
*Queen.* O my son; what theme?
*Ham.* I loved Opelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?
*King.* O, he is mad, Laertes.
*Queen.* For love of God, forbear him.
*Ham.* 'Swounds, show me what thou 'lt do:

*Ham.* What, it is the fair Ophelia!

*Queen.* [*Scattering flowers*] Sweet flowers are the fit strewings for the sweet girl. Farewell! I expected to find you my Hamlet's wife. I should have strewn your birdal bed, but I am strewing your grave.

*Laer.* Let the direst visitation come upon him whose violence deprived you of your intelligence and sanity! Withhold throwing lumps of earth for a while until once more I have clasped her in my arms. [*Leaps into the grave.*

Now heaps on the earth upon the living and dead alike till you have thrown up a mountain, towering above Pelion or the sky kissing blue Olympus.

*Ham.* [*Advancing*] Who is he whose grief is so strongly expressed? whose wailing invokes the planets and makes them pause like hearers who are struck with amazement? This is I, Hamlet the Dane. [*Leaps into the grave.*

*Lear.* May the devil possess your soul! [*Grappling with him.*

*Ham.* You did not pray rightly. I request you to unclasp my throat. For I may not be irascible and reckless, there is in me some latent fury which you should not provoke, if you hold yourself dear. Take off your hand.

*King.* Separate them.

*Queen.* Hamlet, Hamlet!

*All.* Gentlemen,—

*Hor.* My good lord, calm yourself.

[*The Attendants part them, and they come out of the grave.*

*Ham.* I will fight with him on this issue until my eyelids are motionless.

*Queen.* O my son, what issue?

*Ham.* I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers, with all their love put together, cannot equal me in my love. What will you do for her.

*King.* Oh, he is mad, Laertes.

*Queen.* In the name of God, leave him to himself.

*Ham.* God's death! Show me what you will do. Would

Woo 't weep? woo 't fight? woo 't fast? woo 't tear thyself?
Woo 't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?
I 'll do 't. Dost thou come here to whine?
To outface me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her and so will I:
And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou 'lt mouth,
I 'll rant as well as thou.

*Queen.* This is mere madness:
And thus a while the fit will work on him;
Anon, as patient as the female dove
When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
His silence will sit drooping.

*Ham.* Hear you, sir;
What is the reason that you use me thus?
I loved you ever. But it is no matter;
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day. [*Exit.*

*King.* I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him.
[*Exit Horatio.*
[*To Laertes*]. Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech;
We 'll put the matter to the present push.
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.
This grave shall have a living monument:
An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;
Till then, in patience our proceeding be. [*Exeunt.*

## SCENE II. *A Hall in the Castle*

*Enter* HAMLET *and* HORATIO.

*Ham.* So much for this, sir: now shall you see the other;
You do remember all the circumstance?

*Hor.* Remember it, my lord!

*Ham.* Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly,—
And praised be rashness for it; let us know
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well
When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us
There 's divinity that shapes our ends
Rough-hew them how we will—

you weep ? Would you fight ? Would you fast ? Would you tear yourself ? Would you drink vinegar to make you melancholy ? Would you eat a crocodile ? I will do the same. Have you come here to cry plaintively ? To put me out of countenance by leaping into her grave ? If you want to be buried alive with her, so will I. You talk of heaping up mountains upon you, let them pile millions of acres upon us till the elevated surface, coming in contact with the path of the sun, makes Ossa look like a wart. If you want to storm and rage, I am for it too.

*Queen.* This is nothing but madness, the paroxysm will last for a while and then, as patient as a dove when her chicks, covered will yellow down, are hatched, he will be wrapt in languishing silence.

*Ham.* Listen, sir. Why do you treat me so unkindly ? I ever loved you. But it is immaterial. Let the young Hercules (*i.e.*, Laertes) rave, I shall have my turn too. [*Exit.*

*King.* I pray you. Horatio, go with him. [*Exit Horatio.*

[*To Laertes*] Remember all that I said last night and bear yourself in patience. We shall put it to test without any more delay. Good Gertrude, let your son be watched. A life-like monument will grace her grave. We shall presently have a respite ; till then let us act patiently.

SCENE II. *A Hall in the Castle.*

*Enter* HAMLET and HORATIO.

*Ham.* You have heard this much : let me now tell you the rest. You do remember the details ?

*Hor.* I do, my lord.

*Ham.* Sir, there was a struggle going on in my heart, and it would not let me sleep. It seemed to be worse for me than mutineers in chains I acted rashly, and it was good that I did so. Let it be known that a rash, unwise act sometimes serves our turn better than my plans well designed. It should teach us that how our purposes will issue in action depends on Providence, however we may crudely work to fulfill them.

*Hor.* That is most certain.
*Ham.* Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in dark
Groped I to find out them ; had my desire,
Finger'd their packet, and in fine withdrew
To mine own room again ; making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission : where I found, Horatio,—
O royal knavery !—an exact command,
Larded with many several sorts of reasons,
Importing Denmark's health and England's too,
With, ho ! such bugs and goblins in my life,
That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off.
*Hor.* Is 't possible !
*Ham.* Here 's the commission read it at more leisure.
But wilt thou hear now how I did proceed ?
*Hor.* I beseech you.
*Ham.* Being thus be-netted round with villainies,—
O I could make a prologue to my brains.
They had begun the play,—I sat me down ;
Devised a new commission ; wrote it fair
I once did hold it, our statists do,
A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much
How to forget that learning ; but, sir, now
It did me yeoman's service ; wilt thou know
The effect of what I wrote ?
*Hor.* Ay, good my lord.
*Ham.* An earnest conjuration from the king,
As England was his faithful tributary,
As love between them like the palm might flourish,
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear,
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,
And many such-like 'As 'es of great charge,
That, on the view and knowing of these contents,
Without debatement further, more or less
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving-time allow'd.
*Hor.* How was this seal'd ?

*Hor.* There can be little doubt about it.

*Ham.* I left my cabin, the sea-gown wrapt round me, and made my way in the dark to find them. I succeeded in my purpose—and secured the packet of letters, and at last returned to my cabin. I forgot good manners in my fear and broke open the packet. Then I discovered, Horatio,—what a knave the king is !—an unambiguous command, garnished with a multitude of reasons, relating to the wellbeing of both Denmark and England, and heaping on me all sorts of crimes (or representing me as a terror, if allowed to live) that on the perusal of the letter, no respite allowed, not even the time to grind the axe, my head should be cut off.

*Hor.* It is possible ?

*Ham.* Here is the written order ; read it when you have time. Will you hear now how I acted ?

*Hor.* I pray you.

*Ham.* Being thus trapped by villainies—before I could get the preliminaries settled, my brains were quick in acting. I sat down, drafted a new order, wrote it in a fair hand. Like our statesmen, I once considered it vulgarity to write a fair hand, and took a lot of trouble to unlearn it. But, sir, it stood me in good stead. Would you like to know the trend of my writing ?

*Hor.* Yes, my lord.

*Ham.* An earnest entreaty from the king, as England was loyal to him, as friendship between the two countries might grow like the luxuriant palm, as peace should contribute to mutual prosperity, and cement their friendly relations—and similar weighty, but hollow-sounding statements—that on being acquainted with the contents of the letter, without any more ado, the bearers of the letter should be at once put to death, no time allowed to confess their sins.

*Hor.* How was this sealed ?

*Ham.* Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal:
Folded the writ up in the form of the other;
Subscribed it; gave 't the impression: placed it safely,
The changeling never known. Now, the next day
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent
Thou know'st already.

*Hor.* So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to 't.

*Ham.* Why, man, they did make love to this employment;
They are not near my conscience; their defeat
Does by their own insinuation grow:
'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.

*Hor.* Why, what a king is this!

*Ham.* Does it not, think'st thee, stand me now upon—
He that hath kill'd my king, and stained my mother;
Popp'd in between the election and my hopes;
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage—is 't not perfect conscience,
To quit him with this? and is 't not to be damn'd,
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?

*Hor.* It must be shortly known to him from England
What is the issue of the business there.

*Hor.* It will be short: the interim is mine;
And a man's life 's no more than to say 'One'.
But I am very sorry, good Horatio
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For, by the image of my cause, I see
The portraiture of his; I 'll court his favours;
But sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a towering passion.

*Hor.* Peace! who comes here?

*Enter* OSRIC

*Osr.* Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

*Ham.* I humbly thank you, sir. Dost know this water-fly?

*Ext* No, my good lord.

*Ham.* Thy state is the more gracious, for 'tis a vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile: let a beast be lord of

*Ham.* Even in this matter, heaven befriended me. I had my father's signet ring in my purse, which was a copy of the Danish seal ; I folded up the written paper like the one it replaced, signed it, sealed it, put it back in safety ; and they did not suspect that the original packet had been substituted. Next day the fighting with pirates came off, and you are already acquainted with what happened afterwards.

*Hor.* So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz meet their fate.

*Ham.* They deserve it because they batted in into this affair. They do not touch my conscience at all. Their discomfiture is the result of their being too forward. Base creatures as they are, they are caught in the clash of two formidable enemies, and destroyed.

*Hor.* What a wicked king is he !

*Ham.* What do you think now ? Should I not pay off the king who has killed my father, sullied my mother, stepped in between me and the throne, and attempted my very life with a foul trick ? Does not my conscience give me full liberty to make an end of him ? Shall I not have a guilty soul to let this devil live, multiplying evil into evil ?

*Hor.* He will soon hear from England the fate of the mission sent out from here.

*Ham.* There cannot be much time, and I will not let slip the opportunity. A man's life may be cut off in a moment. I am very sorry good, Horatio, that I forgot my manners with Laertes. I can see what he suffers by my own suffering—we are in the same boat, so to say. I shall try to win his good will. But surely the outrageous show he made of his grief evoked in me a violent outburst.

*Hor.* Hush ! Here is somebody coming.

*Enter* OSRIC

*Osr.* Your lordship is heartily welcome back to Denmark.

*Ham.* I am very thankful to you, sir. Do you know this water-fly ?

*Hor.* No, my good lord.

*Ham.* You have a better chance of God's mercy because it is a vice to know him. He owns much fertile land. He is

beasts, and his crib shall stand at the king's mess: 'tis a chough, but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.

*Osr.* Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

*Ham.* I wil receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet to his right use ; 'tis for the head.

*Osr.* I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

*Ham.* No, believe me, 'tis very cold ; the wind is northerly.

*Osr.* It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

*Ham.* But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot, for my complexion.

*Osr.* Exceedingly, my lord ; it is very sultry, as 'twere,—I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter—

*Ham.* I beseech you, remember—

[*Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.*

*Osr.* Nay, good my lord ; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes ; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing: indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.

*Ham.* Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you: though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy the arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail. But in the verity of extolment I take him to be a soul of great article, and his infusion of such dearth and rareness, as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror, and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more.

*Osr.* Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

*Ham.* The concernancy, sir ? why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath ?

*Osr.* Sir ?

*Hor.* Is 't not possible to understand in another tongue ? You will do 't, sir, really.

*Ham.* What imports the nomination of this gentleman ?

*Osr.* Of Laertes ?

no more intelligent than a beast, but as he has landed estate, he has a place at the king's table. He is a jackdaw, but, as I say, he has a large possession.

*Osr.* Sweet lord, if your lordship had time, I should communicate a message from his majesty to you.

*Ham.* I shall receive it, sir, most diligently, Put on your cap ; you need not hold it in your hand ; it is for your head.

*Osr.* I thank your lordship ; it is very hot.

*Ham.* No, I tell you, it is very cold ; the wind comes from the north.

*Osr.* It is somewhat cold, my lord, indeed.

*Ham.* But it seems to me that it is stifling hot, and it is not good for my temperament.

*Osr.* It is exceedingly hot, my lord. It is indeed stifling— I do not know how. But, my lord, his majesty has charged me to tell you that he has laid a bet on your fencing skill. Sir, this is the matter,—

*Ham.* I pray you, remember—

[*Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.*

*Osr.* My good lord, it is indeed more comfortable to stand uncovered. Sir, lately Laertes has come back to Denmark. He is a perfect gentleman of distinguishing accomplishments, gentle and impressive in manners. To speak discriminatingly of him, he is a very pattern of courtesy, you will find in him all the excellences of a gentleman.

*Ham.* Sir, the definition of his qualities that you offer, admits of no deficiency. To make a list of all his excellences would be to overtax the brain—it would be a baffling arithmetical calculation ; yet it (the calculation) will come haltingly behind his perfections. If he is to be truly praised, I consider him to be so exceptionally gifted—and to possess such rare virtues that nothing but his own looking-glass can report him truly ; and he who else would follow him, would be but a shadow to him.

*Osr.* Your lordship speaks most soundly of him.

*Ham.* Leave it alone. Why do we defile the gentleman by our foul breath ?

*Osr.* Sir ?

*Hor.* Can you not make out your own stilted language, spoken by another ? You cannot mistake it, certainly.

*Ham.* What is your purpose in naming the gentleman ?

*Osr.* Laertes ?

*Hor.* His purse is empty already; all 's golden words are spent.

*Ham.* Of him, sir,

*Osr.* I know you are not ignorant—

*Ham.* I would you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me. Well, sir?

*Osr.* You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is—

*Ham.* I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but, to know a man well, were to know himself.

*Osr.* I mean sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he 's unfellowed.

*Ham.* What 's his weapon?

*Osr.* Rapier and dagger,

*Ham.* That 's two of his weapons: but, well.

*Osr.* The king, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses; against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards with their assigns, as girdle hanger, and so: three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, mort delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

*Ham.* What call you the carriages?

*Hor.* I knew you must be edified by the margent ere you had done.

*Osr.* The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

*Ham.* The phrase would be more germane to the matter if we could carry a cannon by our side: I would it might be hangers till then. But, on: six Barbary horses against six French swords their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages; that 's the French bet against the Danish. Why is the 'imponed,' as you call it?

*Osr.* The king, sir, hath laid, sir, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits: he hath laid on twelve for nine: and it would come to immediate trial if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

*Ham.* How if I answer 'no'?

*Osr.* I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

*Ham.* Sir, I will walk here in the hall: if it please his majesty it is the breathing time of day with me; let the foils, be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose. I will win for him an I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

*Hor.* He has exhausted his stock to fine phrases.

*Ham.* Yes, it is Laertes, sir.

*Osr.* You know you are not ignorant—

*Ham.* I wish you knew, sir : yet indeed, if you did know that I was not ignorant, it would not give me much credit either. Well, sir, what do you want to say ?

*Osr.* You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is—

*Ham.* To confess such ignorance might mean to match myself with him in excellence. To know a man well means that one knows oneself.

*Osr.* Sir, I refer to his skill in the use of the weapon. By the praise bestowed on him by people, he must have no equal, as his merit goes.

*Ham.* What is his weapon ?

*Osr.* Rapier and dagger.

*Ham.* These are but two of his weapons. And then, go on.

*Osr.* The king, sir, has betted with him six Barbary horses ; against which he has imponed, (*i. e.*, staked) as I understand, six French rapiers and poniards with appurtenances—girdle, straps, etc. : three of the carriages are of exquisite workmanship and go nicely with the hilts—the rare carriages richly and elaborately wrought.

*Ham.* What do you call the carriages ?

*Hor.* Marginal comments can enlighten you.

*Osr.* The carriages, sir, are hangers,

*Ham.* The word would better fit in if we were carrying cannon by our sides. All right, leave it at hangers till then. But go on : six Barbary horses against six French swords and their appurtenances, and their richly wrought carriages. So it is the French bet against the Danish. Why has this bet been made, or to use your own word, 'imposed' ?

*Osr.* The king's bet comes to this : in a dozen passes between you two Laertes will score twelve hits against your nine—and so Laertes cannot beat you by more than three. If your lordship would agree to it, it would be immediately tried.

*Ham.* What if I say 'no' ?

*Osr.* I mean, my lord, if you answer the challenge.

*Ham.* Sir, I shall walk here in the hall ; it is the time for my exercise, if it may please his majesty. Let the rapiers be brought, the gentleman (Laertes) willing and the king not changing his purpose, I will try to win the bet for him. If I do not win, it will be but my shame, and a few thrusts.

*Osr.* Shall I redeliver you e'en so ?

*Ham.* To this effect, sir, after what flourish your nature will

*Osr.* I commend my duty to your lordship.

*Ham.* Yours, yours [*Exit Osric*] He does well to commend it himself ; there are no tongues else for 's turn.

*Hor.* This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.

*Ham.* He did comply with his dug before he sucked it. Thus has he and many more of the same bevy that I know the drossy age dotes on—only got the tune of the time and outward habit or encounter ; a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fond and winnowed opinions ; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubules are out.

*Enter* a Lord.

*Lord.* My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him, that you attend him in the hall : he sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

*Hom.* I am constant to my purposes : they follow the king's pleasure : if his fitness speaks, mine is ready ; now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

*Lord.* The king and queen and all coming down.

*Ham.* In happy time.

*Lord.* The Queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.

*Ham.* She well instructs me. [*Exit Lord.*

*Hor.* You will lose this wager, my lord,

*Ham.* I do not think so ; since he went into France, I have been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all 's here about my heart : but it is no matter.

*Hor.* Nay, good my lord.—

*Ham.* It is but foolery ; but it is such a kind or gaingiving as would perhaps trouble a woman.

*Hor.* If your mind dislike anything, obey it. I will forestal their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

*Osr*. Shall I so convey the message ?

*Ham*. Yes, sir, this is what I mean ; you may embellish it after your liking.

*Osr*. I offer my service to your lordship.

*Ham*. My service is yours. [*Exit Osric*.] He does well to offer his service himself, for none else can do it in his own way.

*Hor*. This new-hatched lapwing (*i. e*, newly admitted courtier) runs away with the shell on his head (*i.e*, puting on his cap).

*Ham*. He must have bowed to his mother's breast before sucking it. So has he—and there are many more of that kind whom, I know, the frivolous age admires—only acquired the cant phrases of the time and the exterior manner of address—it is all hollow—sounding expression in which are delivered foolish and subtle opinions ; confront them with facts and they break down.

*Enter* a Lord.

*Lord*. My lord, his majesty sent greetings to you by young Osric, and Osric brings word that you will wait for the king in the hall. He sends me to inquire whether it is still your pleasure to have a fencing test with Laertes or whether you will take time over it.

*Ham*. My purpose holds, subject to the king's will. If he thinks that it does not incovenience him, I am ready, either now or whensoever, supposing I am as fit as at this moment.

*Lord*. The king and queen and all the courtiers are coming down.

*Ham*. It is all right then.

*Lord*. The queen desires that you behave nicely with Laertes before you contest with him.

*Hma* Her advice is welcome. [ *Exit Lord*.

*Hor*. You are likely to lose the bet, my lord.

*Ham* I think otherwise. Since I went to France I have kept up my practice in fencing. I shall win with the handicap allowed me. But you cannot imagine how distracted in spirit I am. But I am apathetic.

*Hor*. No, my lord—

*Ham*. It may be sikiness ; it is a kind of misgiving that may trouble a woman.

*Hor*. If your instinct warns you against it, obey it. I shall meet them before they come and tell them that you are not fit.

*Ham* Not a whit ; we defy augury ; there is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come ; if it be not to come, it will be now ; if it be not now, yet it will come : the readiness is all ; since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is 't to leave betimes ? Let be.

*Enter* KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, *and* LORDS, OSRIC *and* Attendants *with foils and gauntlets ; a table and flagons of wine on it.*

*King.* Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.
*[The King puts Laertes' hand into Hamlet's.*

*Ham.* Give me your pardon, sir ; I've done you wrong ;
But pardon 't, as you are a gentleman.
This presence knows,
And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd
With sore distraction. What I have done.
That might your nature, honour and exception
Roughly awake, I have procliam was madness.
Was 't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes ? Never Hamlet :
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he 's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not ; Hamet denies
Who does it then ? His madness : if 't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd ;
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
Sir, in this audience.
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my brother.

*Laer.* I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most
To my revenge : but in my terms of honour
I stand aloof, and will no reconcilement,
Till by some elder masters of known honour
I have a voice and precedent of peace,
To keep my name ungored.
But all that time
I do receive your offer'd love like love
And will not wrong it.

*Ham.* Not all. I scorn portents. It is not without the will of God that a sparrow falls. Readiness is all that matters. What is to happen now, will not happen in future ; what is to happen in future, will not happen now. Since no man takes anything of what he leaves behind, it matters little if he departs from the world early. Let it alone.

*Enter* KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, *and* LORDS, OSRIC *and* Attendants *with foils and gauntlets ; a table and flagons of wine on it.*

*King.* Come, Hamlet. Let me proffer this hand to you.

[*The King puts Laertes' hand into Hamlet's.*

*Ham.* I beg your forgiveness, sir I have wronged you. As a gentleman forgive me. Those who are present here know, and you must have heard too, that I am very much troubled in spirit. Let me say that it was my madness which gave you provocation. Was it Hamlet who wronged you ? Never Hamlet. If Hamlet is not what he is, and wrongs Laertes, then it is not the doing of Hamlet. Hamlet has the right to disown it. Who wrongs Laertes then ? It is Hamlet's madness. If such is the case, Hamlet shares the wrong done the other party. Hamlet's madness is his enemy. Sir, in the presence of all assembled here when I deny any intention of wronging you, let me be forgiven in your generous thought. Just take it as if I have shot the arrow over the house and hurt my brother.

*Laer.* I am satisfied so far as the task of avenging my father's death is concerned. But there remains the question of my honour and I will not be reconciled to you until some elderly persons, more experienced in such matters, give me assurance that my honour remains unhurt. In the meantime, I accept your friendship—and I shall respect it.

*Ham.* I embrace it freely,
And will this brother's wager frankly play.
Give us the foils. Come on.
*Laer.* Come, one for me.
*Ham.* I 'll be your foil, Laertes : in mine ignorance
Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night,
Stick fiery off indeed.
*Laer.* You mock me, sir.
*Ham.* No, by this hand.
*King.* Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager ?
*Ham.* Very well, my lord ?
Your grace has laid the odds o' the weaker side.
*King.* I do not fear it ; I have seen you both :
But since he is better'd, we have therefore odds.
*Laer.* This is too heavy ; let me see another.
*Ham.* This likes me well. These foils have all a length ?
[*They prepare to play.*
*Osr.* Ay, my good lord.
*King.* Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.
If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire ;
The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath ;
And in the cup an union shall he throw,
Richer than that which four successive kings
In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups ;
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,
'Now the king drinks to Hamlet.' Come, begin ;
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.
*Ham.* Come on, sir.
*Laer.* Come, my lord. [*They play.*
*Ham.* One,
*Laer.* No.
*Ham.* Judgement.
*Osr.* A hit, a very palpable hit.
*Laer.* Well ; again.
*King.* Stay ; give me drink, Hamlet, this pearl is thine ;
Here 's to thy health.
[*Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within.*

*Ham.* I welcome it, and am for a brotherly contest with you in fencing for the bet laid upon us. Give us the foils. Come on.

*Laer.* Let me have a foil for myself.

*Ham.* I shall set you off, Laertes. Compared to my ignorance, your skill shall shine like a blazing star in the darkest night.

*Laer.* You are laughing at me, sir.

*Ham.* No, I am serious.

*King.* Give them the foils, Osric. Cousin Hamlet, you know the bet ?

*Ham.* Very well, my lord.
Your Lordship has backed the weaker party.

*King.* I am not doubtful about the result. I have seen you both, and since he has had more of practice, we have allowed you the handicap.

*Laer.* This foil is too heavy : let me try another.

*Ham.* I find mine all right. These foils have all the same length ? [*They prepare to play.*

*Osr.* Yes, my good lord.

*King.* Set the goblets of wine upon that table. If Hamlet gives the first or second hit or repays Laertes, in the third bout any hit scored by him in the first two, let the cannon go off from the battlements. The king shall drink to Hamlet's greater power of endurance, and throw into the cup a pearl, more valuable than any worn by four successive kings of Denmark in their crown. Give me the cups. Let the kettle-drum resound to the trumpet and the trumpet blow to the gunner outside, and the guns roar to the heavens and let it be proclaimed from heaven to earth, 'Now the king drinks to Hamlet' ? Now, begin. And you, the judges, keep a watch.

*Ham.* Come on, sir.

*Laer.* Come, my lord.

*Ham.* One.

*Laer.* No.

*Ham.* Opinion of the judges, please.

*Osr.* It is a hit, and there is no doubt about it.

*Laer.* Well ; again.

*King.* Stop ; give me the drink. Hamlet, this pearl is yours ; I drink your health. [*Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within.*

Give him the cup.
*Ham.* I 'll play this bout first ; set it by a while.
Come. [*They play*] Another hit ; what say you ?
*Laer.* A touch, a touch, I confess.
*King.* Our son shall win.
*Queen.* He 's fat and scant of breath.
Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows :
The queen carouses to the fortune Hamlet.
*Ham.* Good madam !
*King.* Gertrude, do not drink.
*Queen.* I will, my lord ; I pray you, pardon me.
*King.* [*Aside*] It is the poison'd cup ; it is too late.
*Ham.* I dare not drink yet, madam ; by and by.
*Queen.* Come, let me wipe thy face.
*Laer.* My lord, I 'll hit him now.
*King.* I do not think 't.
*Laer.* [*Aside*] And yet it is almost against my conscience.
*Ham.* Come, for the third, Laertes ; you but dally ;
I pray you, pass with your best violence ;
I am afeard you make a wanton of me.
*Laer.* Say you so ? come on, [*They play.*
*Osr.* Nothing, neither way.
*Laer.* Have at you now !

[*Laertes wounds Hamlet ; then, in scuffing, they change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.*

*King.* Part them ; they are incensed,
*Ham.* Nay, come, again. [*The Queen falls.*
*Osr.* Look to the queen there, ho !
*Hor.* They bleed on both sides. How is it, my lord ?
*Osr.* How is 't, Laertes ?
*Laer.* Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric ;
I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.
*Ham.* How does the queen ?
*King.* She swounds to see them bleed.
*Queen.* No, no, the drink, the drink, — O my dear Hamlet,—
The drink, the drink ! I am poison'd. [*Dies.*
*Ham.* O villainy ! Ho ! let the door be lock'd :
Treachery ! seek it out. [*Laertes falls.*
*Laer.* It is here, Hamlet ; Hamlet, thou art slain ;
No medicine in the world can do thee good,
In thee there is not half an hour of life ;

Give him the cup.

*Ham.* Put it away for a while. I must finish this turn first. Come. [*They play*] Another hit. What do you say?

*Laer.* To tell you frankly, it is a mere touch.

*King.* Gur son will win.

*Queen* He is fat and short of breath. Here, Hamlet, take my hankerchief, wipe your forehead. The Queen drinks to your good luck, Hamlet.

*Ham.* Thank you, madam.

*King.* Gertrude, do not drink.

*Queen* I will, my lord; excuse me.

*King.* [*Aside*] It is the poisoned cup. It is too late.

*Ham.* I might not drink yet, madam; soon I shall.

*Queen.* Come, let me wipe your face.

*Laer.* My lord, I shall hit him now.

*King.* I do not believe it.

*Laer.* [*Aside*] My conscience forbids it.

*Ham.* Come, for the third round Laertes. You have not your heart in it. I pray you, put all the drive into your pass. I am afraid you are not taking me sericusly.

*Laer.* Do you say so? Come on. [*They play.*

*Osr.* No hit either way.

*Laer.* I attack you now!

[*Laertes wounds Hamlet, then in scuffling they change repiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.*

*King.* Separate them; they are full of anger.

*Ham.* Nay, come again. [*The Queen falls.*

*Osr.* Attend to the queen there, ho!

*Hor.* Both of them are bleeding. How is it with you, my lord?

*Osr.* How is it with you, Laertes?

*Laer.* Foolish as I am, I have been caught in my own trap, Osric. My own treachery is the cause of my death.

*Ham.* How is the Queen?

*King.* She is swooned on seeing them bleed.

*Queen.* No, no, it is the drink. O my dear Hamlet, I am poisoned. [*Dies.*

*Ham.* O villainy! Ho! let the door be locked! There is treachery, and we must bring it to light. [*Laertes falls.*

*Laer.* There is treachery in me, Hamlet. Hamlet, you are killed. No medicine in the world can save you. You cannot outlive half an hour. The foil in your hand has done the act of

The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenom'd : the foul practice
Hath turn'd itself on me ; lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again : thy mother 's poisoned :
I can no more : the king, the king 's to blame.

*Ham.* The point envenom'd too !
Then, venom, to thy work. *[Stabs the King.*

*All.* Treason ! treason !

*King.* O, yet defend me, friends ; I am but hurt.

*Ham.* Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,
Drink off this potion : is thy union here
Follow my mother. *[King dies.*

*Laer.* He is justly served ;
It is a poison temper'd by himself.
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet :
Mine and my father's death come not upon thee.
Nor thine on me ! *[Dies.*

*Ham.* Heaven make thee of it ! I follow thee.
I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu.
You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time—as this fell sergeant, death,
Is strict in his arrest—O, I could tell you—
But let it be.
Horatio, I am dead ;
Thou livest ; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

*Hor.* Never believe it :
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane ;
Here 's yet some liquor left.

*Ham.* As thou 'rt a man,
Give me the cup : let go ; by heaven, I 'll have 't.
O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me !
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh word draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story. *[March afar off and shot within.*
What warlike noise is this ?

*Osr.* Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,
To the ambassadors of England gives
This warlike volley.

treachery, it is sharp-pointed and poisoned. My villainy has tripped me up. Here I lie not to rise again. Your mother is poisoned. I can say no more. The king is at the bottom of all this.

*Ham.* The point of the rapier poisoned too ! Let the poison do its work then. [*Stabs the King.*

*All.* Treason ! treason !

*King.* Come to my help friends. I am only hurt.

*Ham.* Here, you incestuous murderous, damned Dane, drink this poison. Is your pearl here ? Follow my mother. [*King dies.*

*Laer.* He deserves his fate. It is a poison compounded by himself. Let us forgive each other, noble Hamlet. No blame attaches to you for my death and for my father's death ; nor any blame attaches to me for your death. [*Dies.*

*Ham.* May heaven spare you from any blame for my death ! I follow you. I am dead, Horatio. Miserable queen, farewell ! You look pale and tremble at the sight of the tragedy, and seem to be silent spectators or audience ; if I had been spared a little while – as cruel death holds me in grip—I could tell you everything, but it is not to be. Horatio, I am dead. You still love. Give a true account of me and explain my cause rightly to those who demand to know.

*Hor.* Never believe that I am going to be left behind. I take more after an ancient Roman than I am a Dane. Here is a drop of poison left.

*Ham.* I appeal to your manhood ; let me have the cup ; you have no use for it. O good Horatio, what a bad name I leave behind, if things are left as they are—without an explanation. If you ever loved me, fobear the bliss of dying for a while, and breathe in anguish in the rude world till you have explained my cause. [*March afar off and shot within.*

What warlike sound is that ?

*Osr.* Young Fortinbras returns as conqueror from Poland, and greets the ambassadors of England with the discharge of guns.

*Ham.* O, I die, Horatio ;
The potent poison quite o'er crows my spirit :
I cannot live to hear the news from England ;
But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras : he has my dying voice ;
So tell him, with the occurrents, more and less,
Which have solicited—the rest is silence. [*Dies.*

*Hor.* Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest !
[ *March within.*
Why does the drum come hither ?

*Enter* FORTINBRAS *and the* ENGLISH AMBASSADORS, *with* drum, colours, and Attendants.

*Fort.* Where is this sight ?

*Hor.* What is it you would see ?
If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

*Fort.* This quarry cries on havoc. O proud Death ;
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,
That thou so many princes at a shot
So bloodily hast struck ?

*First Amb.* The sight is dismal ;
And our affairs from England come too late :
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing,
To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd,
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead :
Where should we have our thanks ?

*Hor.* Not from his mouth
Had it the ability of life to thank you :
He never gave commandment for their death.
But since, so jump upon this bloody question,
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
Are here arrived, give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view ;
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about : so shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on the inventors' heads : all this can I
Truly deliver.

*Ham.* Oh, I die, Horatio. The powerful poison triumphs over my spirit. I cannot live long enough to hear the news from England. But let me declare beforehand that election is to go to Fortinbras as King of Denmark. He has my support in the moment of my death. Tell him this and acquaint him with all that has occurred, in more or less details, driving to me to these actions. The silence of death covers everything else.

*Hor.* Now breaks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince. May a company of angels sing you to eternal sleep !

[*March within.*

Why does the music of the drum draw near ?

*Enter* FORTINBRAS, *and the* ENGLISH AMBASSADORS, *with* drum, colours and Attendants.

*Fort.* Where is this sad sight ?

*Hor.* What do you want to see ? If anything of tragic sorrow or amazement, here you see it.

*Fort.* The heap of dead bodies cries out for widespread slaughter in revenge. O proud Death, you begin a grand feast in your hold ; you have swept off so many princes at one stroke.

*First Amb.* It is a harrowing sight. We come too late with the mission from England. The ears that should give us hearing, are now silenced in death. We have come to tell him that his order has been carried out. We shall go without thanks.

*Hor.* If be had been alive to thank you, you would have no thanks from him. He never gave orders for their death. Since you returning from Polish wars and you, from England, encounter this bloody business, command that their dead bodies are placed high on a stage for public view, and let me speak to those who know nothing how these things happened. And you shall hear a narrative of adulterous, bloody and brutal acts, of impulsive judgments, accidental slaughters, of deaths instigated by treachery and circumstances beyond human control ; and in the final outcome, of the entrapment of the plotters themselves. All these I can communicate exactly as they happened.

*Fort.* Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune:
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

*Hor.* Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
And from his mouth whose voice will draw no more:
But let this same be presently perform'd
Even while men's minds are wild; less more mischance
On plots and errors happen.

*Fort.* Let four captains
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage;
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have proved most royally:
And, for his passage,
The soldiers' music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him.
Take up the bodies: such a sight as this
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

[*A dead march. Exeunt, bearing off the bodies; after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.*

*Fort.* Let us hear the story as soon as possible, and summon the noblest to inform them of the developments. As for me, in sorrow of heart I accept my fortune. I have here some rights which may be remembered—the right which it is now my turn to claim.

*Hor.* Of yoor rights I shall have need to speak ; it is what the dying voice of Hamlet delivered, and others will support. Let this duty to Hamlet be performed immediately while men are agitated and distracted, and this to forestall further mischiefs, resulting from plots and blunders.

*Fort.* Let four captains carry the dead body of Hamlet to the stage, with all honour, due to a soldier, for if he had succeeded to the throne, he would have been the finest king. Let his death be honoured with martial music and formality. Lift up the bodies ; such a scene might have suited a battlefield, and is misplaced here. Go and bid the soldiers fire off.

[*A dead march. Exeunt bearing off the bodies ; after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.*

# NOTES

## Act I. Scene I.

**Argument.** The play opens at midnight on the ramparts of the Castle at Elsinore. Hamlet's friend, Horatio, joins the company of Marcellus and Bernardo ; he wants to find out the truth about the ghost. He does not believe in a ghost, however. The ghost appears again as Bernardo repeats the story. There can be no doubt now ; the ghost appears to be that of the late king in full armour and stalks solemnly past. Horatio, at first startled at the sudden apparition, quickly recovers himself and addresses the ghost. The ghost disappears. Horatio speculates about the apparition. It may have something to do with the warlike threat directed against the Danish State by the young Norwegian Fortinbras. Horatio incidentally recalls the fearful portents that heralded the fall of Julius Caesar. While he is discussing the matter with his friends, the ghost reappears. He addresses the ghost once more. He must have been urged to do so by his pity for the wandering ghost and his anxiety about his country. The ghost, about to speak, suddenly breaks off—and departs as the cock crows. The three men try to bar the ghost's way and even thrust a halberd at him. The ghost, as if to mock them, now appears in one place, then in another, and in a moment, is gone. They go on talking about the effect of cock-crow on wandering ghosts. By this time Horatio notices that night is almost ended. They decide to communicate the matter to Hamlet.

The scene is pretty lengthy. One might suppose that a briefer scene would have served the purpose Marcellus has nothing else to do with the action. Horatio plays a comparatively small part. The opening scene has been made so lengthy in the interest of the general construction of the play. The full emotional value is secured. First, fear of the supernatural overwhelms men who are by no means cowards, and infects the spectators—and their interest in what is to come is at once awakened. Secondly, the reference to Caesar's death seems to be a presage of fateful events.

Hamlet is mentioned only in the last words of the scene, as if casually—and we can little foresee the reaction that will appear in Hamlet when he hears the story of the ghost. There is no understandable hint about the character of Hamlet, the protagonist of the play. All that we see is that Horatio and others are

loyally bound to Hamlet—and that Horatio appears to be courageous, likeable, and filled with comradely feelings for his friends. Hamlet looms us as a figure that may baffle us—critics too. The supernatural effect produced here is most tremendous. The play opens in an atmosphere of mystery and terror, which partly determines the whole character of the play.

## NOTES

1. **Who 's there**—The challenge should have come from Francisco who is on duty. Bernardo appears to be a bit nervy. It is a dark and cold night. And who knows that the ghost might not appear again ?

2. **Unfold ourself**—let me know who you are.

3. **Long live the king**—the watchword. N.B. The play is going to end with the death of the king, and so there is unconscious irony in it.

6. **Upon your hour**—in the nick of time.

9. **Sick at heart**—Francisco's words seem to set the tone of the play. Hamlet is sick at heart, and has good reason to be so—"the time is out of joint." The spirit of times seems to affect Francisco also.

10. **Not a mouse stirring**—(1) not the least disturbance during his watch ; (2) the still, death-like silence of the night.

13. **Rivals**—partners.

15. **Liegemen... ...Dane**—subjects to the King of Denmark.

19. **A piece of him**—A light-hearted answer from Horatio, whose personal detachment from the haunting fear of his companions is noticeable. Horatio has a sceptical mind so far as the ghost is concerned. He has been brought by Marcellus to keep watch with them for the appearance of the ghost.

21. **Has this thing appear'd**—Note again Horatio's contemptuous reference to the ghost.

23. **'Tis .....fantasy**—the ghost is nothing but a figment of our imagination.

24. **Will...him**—will not be persuaded to believe the fact.

25. **Dreaded sight**—apparition.

29. **Approve .....eyes**—bear us out.

30. **Tust, tush**—it is all rot you are talking.

31. **Assail your ears**—try to convince you.

32. **Fortified .....story**—stubborn in disbelieving.

35. **Yond same star**—The reference is "made principally for technical reasons. Those on watch are standing down-stage, facing the audience, and turn up-stage to look at the star : and at this moment, the ghost appears. When he enters for the second time (i. iv. 38) this turning up stage is again well-notified by the sound of the trumpet and the periodical firing off of cannon."

**Pole**—polar star.

37. **His**—it. **Course**—movement.

40. **Break thee off**—silence !

41. **In the same figure......dead**—in the very likeness of the king who is lately dead.

42. **Scholar**—N. B. Horatio is a scholar, and must know Latin. The notion that ghosts, devils, and witches would notice only what was addressed to them in Latin was a superstition that lingered. It was a reminiscence of the exercising formula of the Roman Church. Reed quotes Beaumont and Fletcher, *Night Walker, II* :—

> Let's call the butler up, for he speaks Latin,
> And that should daunt the devil.

44. **Harrows ........wonder**—afflicts me with fear and amazement.

45. **It ........spoke to**—refers to the belief that a ghost would not speak until he was addressed. Compare Boswell's *Life of Johnson* : "Johnson once observed to me, 'Tom Tyers described me the best : "Sir (said he) you are like a ghost : you never speake till you are spoken to." ' "

46. **Usurp'st...night**—*i. e.*, walk so late at night when you should lie in your grave.

50. **Stalks away**—moves off majestically.

53. **How...pale**—Now it is the turn of Bernardo to twist Horatio who has stubbornly refused to believe their story. Horatio is now shaken with terror.

56. **Before my God**—an oath.

57. **Sensible**—open to the senses. **Avouch**—evidence.

61. **Ambitious Norway**—the ambitious King of Norway.

62. **Parle**—conference.

63. **Sledded Polacks**—Poles in sleds or sledges.

64. **Jump**—exactly. **Dead hour**—midnight.

65. **In what......not**—I do not know any definite course of thought to follow.

66. **In the gross......opinion**—so far as I can make out, or following what my opinion tends to.

67. **Bodes**—forebodes ; presages. **Strange.....state**—some unexpected outbreak in Denmark.

71. **Observant**—vigilant.

72. **Toils.....land**—*i.e.*, makes the subject toil. **Subject**—is collective.

73. **Cast**—manufacture.

74. **Mart**—purchase. **Implements of war**—weapons.

75. **Impress**—forcible recruiting. **Shipwrights**-shipbuilders. **Sore task**—tedious and toilsome work.

77. **Toward**—going to happen. **Sweaty haste**—toilsome and hasty preparation for war.

78. **Doth make.....day**—*i. e.*, does not distinguish night from day for toil.

80. **The whisper goes so**—so the rumour in whispered breath runs.

81. **Image**—phantom.

83. **Prick'd on**—incited. **Emulate**—emulous.

84. **Our valiant Hamlet**—*i. e.*, the late King.

85. **This side.....world**—*i. e.*, Denmark and the neighbouring countries.

86. **Compact**—agreement.

87. **Ratified**—confirmed. **Law and heraldry**—*i.e.*, heraldic law *i. e*, law regulating affairs of honour and war.

88. **Forfeit**—part with.

89. **Stood seized of**—occupied. **Conqueror**—*i.e*, the late king.

90. **Moiety competent**—portion equal in value

91. **Gaged**—staked. **Had return'd**—would have returned.

93. **Covenant**—pact.

94. **Carriage.....design'd**—import or sense of the argument drawn up.

96. **Unimproved**—rash and without experience. **Mettle**—spirit.

98. **Shark'd up**—enlisted indiscriminately. **Resolutes**—desperate characters.

100. **That.....in 't**—which demands courage, or has a spice of danger in it.

102. **By strong hand**—by violence.

103. **Terms compulsatory**—*i.e.*, coercing conditions. **Foresaid**—above-mentioned.

106. **The source...watch**—the cause or reason of this inceasing vigilance, maintained by us. **Cheaf head**—main reason.

107. **Post-haste**—excess of haste. **Romage**—bustle and commotion.

109. **Sort**—turn out to be. **Portentous figure**—the ghost presaging some serious trouble.

111. **That......wars**—who was directly concerned in these wars with the present sequel.

112. **Mote**—a speck of dust. **A mote......eye**—a mere speck of dust hurts the eye; but here is not a little serious matter that is agitating the mind. Dover Wilson explains it differently. Horatio, recovering his balance, belittles the ghost. From what he has said above concerning war-like preparations going on, Horatio is not likely to belittle the ghost.

113. **Palmy**—prosperous. **State**—either condition or commonwealth.

115. **Tenantless**—*i. e.*, the dead having come out. **Sheeted**—in their shrouds.

116. **Squeak and gibber**—scream.

117. **Stars ..fire**—*i. e*, comets. **Dews of blood**—red dews were connected with comets. Chambers points out that red dews are dropped by butterifles as they come out of chrysales N. B. Comets were supposed to foretell war to the reigning king, or war or a plague.

118. **Disasters**—unfavourable aspects (in the astronomical sense). **Moist star**—moon.

119. **Influence**—another astrological word, meaning the influence the stars exercise upon human destinies. **Neptune's empire**—*i. e.*, the seas for Neptune is the sea-god.

120. **Was sick... ..eclipse**—was so dark that the Day of Judgment seemed to be at hand, it being the result of an eclipse. A reference to the prophecy in St. Matthew XXIV, 39 : "The sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light." An eclipse was supposed to be an evil portent. N. B. Dover Wilson points out that there were solar and lunar eclipses in 1598, which filled the superstitious people of the day with fear, moon and says that astrologers foretold the disastrous effects, to which was attributed the Essex rising of February 1501.

121. **Like......events**—similar heralding of terrible events.

122. **Harbingers**—precursors. **Still**—always. **Fates**—human destinies.

123. **Prologue**—in a Greek play, the part before the entry of the chorus ; so forerunner here. **Omen coming on**—*i. e.*, the evil that is to come. **Omen**—means the sign of evil ; here it means the evil itself.

125. **Climatures**—regions.

126. **Where......again**—the ghost reappears.

127. **Cross it**—*i. e.*, cross the path of ghost. N. B. To cross the path of a spirit or to be crossed by a spirit, either in the shape of man or an animal, was considered to lead to serious consequences. **Though...use**—though the ghost gets me under his evil power. **Illusion**—Horatio still continues to think that the ghost is not a reality.

130. **If there......done**—it was believed that a ghost could not rest in the grave if he had some secret to tell, or some buried treasure to reveal to the heir, or might have a revenge to accomplish, and so walked the earth.

131. **Ease**—*i. e.*, peace to the restless and wandering spirit. **Grace**—a good turn ; a favourable influence.

133. **If thou...fate**—if you know anythig of the calamity that might happen to your country.

134. **Haply**—perhaps. **Foreknewing......avoid**—*i. e.*, foreknowledge may avert.

137. **Extorted treasure**—wealth obtained by forcible means (as landowner obtains from his tenants).

139. **Speak of it**—speak if you have something to communicate.

140. **Partisan**—a kind of halberd, consisting of a blade like that of a battle axe balanced by a hook, with a pointed end like a spear.

141. **Do, if it.. ...stand**—Horatio seems to lose his head for a moment when he bids Marcellus to strike the ghost with the partisan. The ghost is but a shadow.

142. **'Tis here**—the ghost shifts from place to place, and they seem to chase him about.

143. **We do......majestical**—i. e., it is to show a sigh of great superiority by offering to strike the ghost, and they forget that the ghost cannot be hurt physically.

145. **Invulnerable**—incapable of being hurt.

146. **Our vain blows...mockery**—we are mocked by the blows we strike, for they miss the object.

147. **It was......crew**—the cock-crow was a signal for the spirits to get back into their graves. Bernardo only supposes that the ghost would have spoken if it were not time to get back into his grave.

148. **Started**—made a sudden involuntary movement as of surprise. **Guilty thing**-guilty creature of one caught red-handed.

150. **That......morn**—that announces daybreak.

154. **Extravagant and erring**—*i. e.*, wandering. Both the words are used in their original sense. **Hies**--hastens.

155. **Confine**—place of confinement.

156. **Probation**—proof.

153—156. **Whether......prolation**-"According to the pneumatology of that time every element was inhabited by its peculiar order of spirits. The meaning therefore is, that all *spirits extravagant,* wandering out of their element, whether aerial spirits visiting earth, or earthly spirits ravaging the air, return to their station, to their proper limits, in which they are confined." (*Dr. Johnson*)

158. **That season**—*i. e.*, Christmas season.

159. **Saviour's birth**—birth of Jesus Christ.

160. **The bird of dawning**—cock.

158—160. **Some say.........long**—Dover Wilson quotes R. Jefferies, **Wild Life in a Southern Country**: "Towards the end of December, the cocks, reversing their usual practice, crow in the evening hours before midnight. The cock-crow is usually associated with the dawn, but the change of habit, just when the nights are longest, is interesting."

161. **Stir abroad**—get out of the grave and walk the earth.

162. **Wholesome**—free from the influence of evil spirits, witches, etc. **Strike**—exercise an evil influence.

163. **Takes**—enchants.

164. **Hallow'd**—sacred. **Gracious**—blessed.

166. **The morn .....clad**—N. B. A magnificent description of sunrise. It was initiated by Milton.

Morning fair
Came forth with pilgrim steps, in *amica grey*.

*Paradise Regained*. IV, 4 6—477.

**Russet**—it may mean *red* or *reddish,* but it is *grey* in Elizabethan English.

169. **Impart**—communicate.

173. **As needful......loves**—as we are bound in duty and love to do.

**Points to be noted :—**

(1) Hint of troubled times in the opening scene, particularly from Horatio's long narrative, linking up the visitations of the ghost with the portents that preceded the fall of Julius Caesar.

(2) Horatio is brought in to meet the ghost, for he can solve the matter. What is more important is that he finally brings together the ghost and Hamlet.

(3) Horatio's narrative seems to crystallize the issue, but it served another purpose. It conveys to us the impression of a great king that was—

Our valiant Hamlet—
For so this side of our known world esteemed him.

In the next scene we meet the present King Claudius, and we feel the contrast, for Claudius can talk glibly, has all the tricks of a diplomatist, and has won over all the councillors ; and it is a court full of vice, sensuality and intrigue.

(4) Horatio attempts an explanation of the portent. It is true that war-like preparations are going on, but the fact is, as we shall see, that there is less danger from abroad than from within, and that it is some foul deed done in Denmark, whose contagion is spreading and needs to be arrested. When Francisco says that he is sick at heart, it is but a glimpse of the corrupt, demoralizing influence of the times, which so depresses Francisco's sensitive spirit.

(5) The time, taken by the opening scene, is from midnight to dawn, but there is no relaxing of tension, which Horatio's explanation of the portent seems rather to increase.

## Scene II

**Argument** : The present King Claudius, holds a council, and makes his position clear to the obliging courtiers. While still mourning the recent death of his brother, he has formed a marriage alliance with his brother's widow for the good of the state. He glosses over the ambiguity in his position. He is quite alive to the hostile intentions of his country's enemies. He *kings* it all right in the clear and intelligent orders he gives, in his courteous manner towards those about him, in the serious words he addresses to the ambassadors.

To Laertes he seems a little too friendly and benevolent, and even ingratiating and that because the services of Polonius, Laertes's father and Lord Chamberlain, are indispensable to him. Claudius graciously permits Laertes to return to Paris. Next the King turns to Hamlet, and manifests special warmth of him. Hamlet responds with a sarcastic play on words. The queen too speaks to him, and begs him to cast off his mourning—and the way she speaks reveals her limited understanding and shallowness of her nature. Hamlet flares up at her word 'seems' in reference to his grief for his father, and explains all the difference between what 'is' and what 'seems'. The king tries to put in a quiet word now. He deprecates the excess of Hamlet's grief; he even considers it blameworthy, since it is against 'nature' and reason. He desires Hamlet to renounce his plan of going back to Wittenberg, as he would miss his presence at court. The queen adds her request. To please his mother, Hamlet agrees to stay, taking no notice of the king's appeals.

In the council, the king is the dominating figure. Shakespeare is not yet concerned with the delineation of his character, or revealing his villainy. All that we see now is that he is a competent ruler attending to affairs of state, enacting decrees, making decisions, getting his own way, justifying it, and being gracious to all about him. The queen seems to be rather unintelligent, and entirely in the power of her husband. We are certainly more interested in Hamlet. When left alone, he vents his feelings. The reason for his aloofness now grows clear. He seems to be very unhappy, wholly at odds with himself and dwelling on suicide. His mother's overhasty marriage seems to have shaken him deeply, undermining his faith in the moral order of the world. A careful analysis of his character will show that he is a man of high moral ideals, with the strongest impluse towards what is good; hence disillusionment is so great. His veneration for his father has much to do with his violent reaction to the conduct of his mother. His final pronouncement on women ('Frailty thy name is woman') is but characteristic of this reaction. His pent-up feelings are expressed in his soliloquy. In the council scene, he appears to be guarded in speech, however strongly he feels. This attitude of caution in Hamlet should not be overlooked.

At the end of his soliloquy, he happens to meet his friends. Lost in thought, he returns their greetings mechanically. He is interested in Horatio, whom he has not seen for some time.

Hamlet asks him what has brought him to Elsinore. He rejects Horatio's reply that he has come to attend his father's funeral, but suggests that it must be his mother's wedding. Horatio seems to understand his mood and confesses that the one followed too closely upon the other. It is all thrift, says Hamlet 'the funeral baked meats' furnished forth the marriage table. Hamlet happens to refer to his father. Now Horatio discreetly praises the late king, and Hamlet responds quickly. It is the moment for Horatio to tell him of the ghost's appearance. Hamlet makes up his mind to meet the ghost. He earnestly begs them all to keep the matter secret as they have till now.

My futher's spirit in arms ! all is not well ;
I doubt some foul play.

This is how Hamlet's mind begins to work.

## NOTES

**Enter the King, Queen, etc.**—"A flourish of trumpets; and the King and Queen come in state to preside at Council. The King makes a brilliant figure—the 'very, very peacock' of Hamlet's later gibe—and the courtiers, happily released from their recent mourning, would respectfully ape his fashion."

1—2. **Though...green**—though I cannot forget the recent death of my brother, who is so dear to me. **Green**—fresh ; not faded.

3. **To bear.....grief**—not to dismiss grief from our hearts.

4. **To be .....woe**—*i. e.*, to wear a look of sadness.

5. **Discretion .....nature**—wisdom struggled with the natural forrow of our hearts.

6. **Wisest sorrow**—grief for my late brother that but not made me forget my duty to the state.

7. **Remembrance of ourselves**—*i. e.*, what we owe to ourselves and to our country.

8. **Sometime**—former. **Sister**—sister-in-law.

9. **Jointress**—partner. **Warlike state**-the state, engaged in warlike preparation to repel the impending attack of young Fortinbras (already elaborated in the opening scene). N. B. This is the reason, given by Claudius, for hastily ascending the throne and marrying his brother's wife, for the king must have a queen. But why was Hamlet's claim to the throne overlooked ? Claudius manoeuvred to get him nominated to the throne, to the exclusion of Hamlet. Gertrude whose love he stole, was his first objective, and to win Gertrude, he had to secure the throne of Denmark too.

10. **Defeated joy**—joy neutralized by grief.

11. **An auspicious...eye**—*i. e.,* a look cheerful and sad at the same time.

12. **Mirth...marriage**—the wedding took place after the death of his brother and so there was a mingling of joy and sorrow occasioned by both events. It is an unconscious confession of the unseemliness of his marriage with Gertrude.

13. **In......weighing**—balancing. **Dole**—grief.

14—15. **Barr'd..... wisdoms**—extended your considered views which are a better guide for my action.

15—16—**Have......along**—*i. e.,* supported my accession to the throne and marriage.

18. **Supposal**—estimate, calculation.

20. **Our state......frame**—our kingdom to have been disorganized.

21. **Colleagued**—aided. **The dream ..advantage**—the fancied chance.

22. **Pester**—trouble.

23. **Importing**—relating to.

24. **Bonds of law**—legal obligations.

26. **For......meeting**—why we have met in council at this particular time.

28. **Norway**—the King of Norway.

31. **Gait**—proceeding. **Levies**—troops collected.

32. **Proportions**—number of troops.

33. **Subject**—collectively used.

38. **Delated**—detailed.

39. **Let..... duty**—let your sense of duty be demonstrated by the quickness with which you perform the mission.

41. **Nothing**—not at all.

44-45. **You cannot ..voice**—any reasonable request made by you to the King of Denmark, cannot but be granted.

47—49. **The head father**—Claudius confesses his gratefulness to Polonius and also his absolute dependence of him. He puts this in every graphic language. The head cannot be more closely related to the heart nor the hand can be of greater service to the mouth than the King of Denmark to Polonius.

50. **Dread**—dreaded.

53. **Duty**—loyalty.

56. **Bow them to**—are subject to. **Pardon**—permission adopted.

58. **Wrung**—forced.

59. **Laborious petition**—pressing and prolonged request.

60. **Upon his will**—to his desire. **Hard**—*i. e.*, hard to win or won after a great deal of effort.

62. **Take...thine**—I wish you a good time in Paris.

63. **Graces**—accomplishments.

64. **Cousin**—formerly, very frequently applied to a nephew or niece. Hamlet takes it in the sense of *kinsman.*

65. **A litttle......kind**—(1) "there is something more than mere kinship between us, but there is not the natural feeling or kindly disposition which should accompany our relationship ;" (2) "a little more than kinsman, since you have married my mother, yet hardly your son, since the marriage is incestuous."

66. **Clouds**—depression or melancholy. **How is it...you**—Hamlet is still in mourning. That is why Cladius says so.

67. **I am...the sun**—Hamlet quibbles on Claudius's 'my son'. Why, he is being made too much of as a son. As Johnson points out, there may be a reference to the proverb, 'out of God's blessing into the warm sun', which means to be out of house and home, outlawed, disinherited.

68. **Nighted colour**—black mourning dress.

69. **Denmark**—King of Denmark. The Queen pleads with Hamlet to take Claudius as his father.

70. **Veiled**—lowered. **Lids**—eyelids.

71. **Seek...dust**—the idea is that his mourning will not bring back his father into life.

72. **'Tis common**—death is common, or that a father dies and a son mourns him for a specific period, and there the matter ends.

73. **Nature**—moral nature. **Eternity**—life eternal.

74. **Ay, madam.. common**—N. B. It is a sarcastic rejoinder. There is the veiled taunt that the death of her husband has been but a common grief in which she shared just like others.

75. **Why seems......thee**—N. B. The queen's remark unconsciously falls in with the sense that Hamlet puts upon 'common'. Why should Hamlet make so much of his grief for his dead father—why should he make it so much a personal matter ? Then the word 'seems' suggests to Hamlet that his grief is purposely put on, or is all a show with him.

76. **Seems......it is**—my grief is no show, but a realit. **I ..."seems"**—I know what grief is, and not what a show of grief is.

78. **Customary......black**—the black suit that goes with mourning.

79. **Windy......breath**—heavy sighs about which there is something artificial.

80. **Fruitful rival**—*i. e.*, flowing and unceasing tears *Fruitful*, because making a profound impression upon the beholders. It is a fling at his mother's show of grief—*Like Niobe all Tears*, as Hamlet refers to it in line 149.

81. **Haviour**– bearing, carriage.

82. **Forms......grief**—formal and outward manifestations of grief.

83. **Denote**–express. **These seen**—these are all a show.

84. **For they......play**—these can be put on or it is but playing the part of a mourner.

85. **I have . show**—my grief is too deep to be outwardly manifested. No outward show can adequately express my grief.

86. **Trappings .... woe** - garments that grief puts on.

87. **'Tis sweet .... Hamlet**—Claudius adopts a conciliatory tone towards Hamlet. Hamlet's antagonism might load him on serious trouble, and the king must soothe away his growing irritation.

91. **Filial obligation**—the duty of a son to his father. **Some term**—a specific period.

92. **Obsequious sorrow**—*i. e.*, mourning as a funeral rite. **Persever**—*i. e.*, persevere.

93. **Obstinate condolement**—self-willed grief.

94 **Impious stubbornness**—*i. e.*, a stubbornness which God must condemn. **Unmanly grief**—grief which discredits manhood.

95. **A will . heaven**—*i. e.*, a will rebellious against God.

96. **A heart unfortified**—a heart open to gusts of passion.

97. **Unschool'd**—untrained.

98. **What .. be**—what we know to be inevitable.

99 **The most...sense**—the thing so easily perceived by the senses.

100. **Peevish opposition**—stubborn resistance to the will of God.

101. **Take . ...heart**—cherish too fondly. **Fault to heaven**—offence against God.

102. **A fault......dead**—doing dishonour to the dead. **Nature**—*i. e.*, human nature.

103. **To reason......absurd**—preposterous.
104. **Still**—always.
105. **Corse**—corpse.
106. **Throw to earth**—discard.
107. **Unprevailing woe**—grief that leads nowhere.
109. **The most......throne**—the next heir to the throne.
110. **For**—as for. **Intent**—intention.

111. **Wittenberg**—the University of Wittenberg (in Germany) was well-known to Elizabethan play-goers, for it is the scene of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

114. **Retrograde**—contrary. An astrological term, referring to the bad influence of a planet, moving away from the earth. Claudius evidently wants to keep Hamlet in Denmark so that he may be always under watch.

115. **Bend you**—*i. e.*, incline.
116. **In......eye**—to be a delight and comfort to us.

122. **Be......Denmark**—make no difference between you and ourselves ; do not keep aloof from us.

123. **Unforced**—voluntary. **Accord**—consent.
124. **Grace**—honour.

125—126. **No jocund..... fell**—*i. e.*, Hamlet's gracious consent is to be celebrated by clamorous health-drinking with a discharge of guns.

127. **Rouse**—drinking bout. N. B. The Court of Denmark in the time of Shakespeare was notorious for intemperance. **Bruit** - re-echo.

129. **O, that this too too solid flesh...melt**—the soliloquy comes before Hamlet meets Horatio and learns of the appearance of the ghost. The brooding trouble of his mind is connected with his mother's overhasty marriage, of which he has dropped veiled hints already. It is the cause of his cynicism and disillusionment. His moral sense has been outraged, and he cannot get over this incestuous marriage of his mother, is oversensitive and high-strung, but his moral sensibilities make his nature still more "complex". The shock at his mother's behaviour bears him down. **Solid flesh**—some think that the Quarto reading—'sullied flesh'—is better. His mother's marriage is a personal defilement to him. But 'solid' may do as well. The physical sensation of loathing at his mother's incestuous marriage is too much for him to bear—and the trouble is that he cannot get rid of it. Perhaps death would relieve him of it.

130. **Resolve**--dissolve.

131. **Canon**—divine prohibition against self-slaughter.

133. **How weary...unprofitable**—Hamlet expresses his cynical view of life, which, we cannot believe, is inherent in him, but is attributable to what he finds his mother to be. It should be noted that Hamlet is too quick in generalization. His mother's sensuality should not have made him thoroughly disgusted with life, nor cry out against woman as frailty.

135—136. **'Tis....seed**—the world is a garden where weeds grow luxuriantly, and the weeds are unwholesome actions of men and women. **Rank**—growing too fast, and also evil-smelling.

137. **That....this**-he is thinking of his mother's decline in virtue-her transfer of love from his father, a right royal king, to Claudius, a mean and paltry fellow, compared to his father.

138. **Hyperion**—the sun-god. **Satyr**—a woodland god represented with a bestial facial expression, long, pointed ears and short horns, and the tail of a horse or goat. Hamlet compares Claudius to a satyr because of his lasciviousness.

141. **Beteem**—allow.

141—142. **That he might.. ...roughly**—the picture of a tenderly loving husband.

143—145. **She would hang...on**—Hamlet also noticed his mother to be very fond of his father, and clinging passionately to him. There is the hint of the sensuality of her nature ; her desire for him seemed to have grown the more as it was satisfied. **Within...month**—first it was two months : now it is one month. His mother's misdeed revolts him so much that a month or two makes a little difference. The unseemly haste in marrying Claudius fills Hamlet with loathing.

146. **Frailty .....woman**-Hamlet is too apt to generalize. He convicts all women because her mother deviates from virtue. Later his behaviour towards Ophelia changes accordingly.

149. **Niobe**—daughter of Tantalus and wife of Amphion, King of Thebes, whose fourteen children were slain by Apollo and Artemis, because she in her pride compared herself with their mother, Leto, who had only two children, changed by Zeus into a stone which in summer shed tears.

150. **Discourse of reason**—faculty of reasoning.

153. **Hercules**—the most famous hero of classical antiquity, known for his great strength and for the twelve tasks, imposed upon him because of Juno's hatred for him.

154. **Unrighteous**—hypocritical.

155. **Flushing**—*i. e.*, red swelling. **Galled**—irritated.

158. **But break.........tongue**—Hamlet must keep her tongue tight and let her heart break within.

160. **I do......myself**—I am mistaken. Hamlet is lost in thought when Horatio appears before him. He does not recognize Horatio in the first instance.

162. **Sir, my good friend**—I should prefer you as my good friend rather than as a servant. **That name**—*i.e.*, servant. **I'll ..... you**—I should change places with you.

163. **What...Wittenberg**—what are you doing here away from Wittenberg where you should have been ?

168. **A truant disposition**—it is just a habit to run away from school.

169. **I would......so**—Hamlet knows that Horatio is a scholar. If his enemy were to tell him that Horatio had run away from Wittenberg. Hamlet would not believe him.

170. **Violence**—gross injustice.

174. **We'll ...depart**—drunkenness was a reputed vice of the Danes. Hamlet is very sensitive to the vice and corruption of the age which the Danish Court reflects.

177. **I think......wedding**—it is the sore point with Hamlet, and he breaks out into it.

178. **It follow'd hard upon**—it has struck Horatio too that the queen's marriage came too soon.

179—180. **Thrift..... tables**—Hamlet makes a caustic remark on it. It was all a saving of expense. The pastry that wes prepared for the funeral of his father, served also for the wedding of his mother. N. B. Hamlet is now walking apart with Horatio, and so can confide to him his own feeling about his mother's marriage.

181. **Dearest**—bitterest.

182. **Or ever**—before.

184. **Mind's eye**—imagination.

185. **He .....all**—Hamlet means that his father was the best of men he had ever seen.

191. **Season your admiration**—keep your amazement within limits.

192. **Attent**—attentive. **Deliver**—narrate.

193. **Marvel**—the marvellous story.

197. **Dead vast**—*i. e.*, the void or vacancy of night with death-like silence.

199. **Cap-a-pe**—from head to foot.

201. **Oppress'd......eyes**—eyes staring wide open in fear and surprise.

203—204. **Distill'd .....fear**—*i. e.*, almost paralysed by fear (reduced to a passive mass by fear).

206. **Dreadful secrecy**—they wanted to keep it secret out of fear and confided it only to Horatio.

208—209. **Both in time......thing**—keeping the exact time and the same shape or figure. **Made...good**—confirmed.

211. **These...like**—Horatio attests the exact resemblance between the apparition and Hamlet's father.

215—285. **Did......speak**—moved his lips to speak.

221. **Writ .....duty**—dictated by our duty.

222. **This troubles me**—Hamlet gives a light appearance to the communication he receives, and hides his own agitation of mind.

225. **Arm'd**—did he appear armed ?

228. **Then saw...face**—Hamlet wants to have his doubts resolved whether it was the ghost of his father or some evil spirit masquerading as his father.

229. **Beaver**—movable part of the helmet.

231. **A countenance......anger**—it must be sorrow for the behaviour of his queen, whom he had loved so much. He has still a weakness for his queen, and when he appears to Hamlet later, he warns Hamlet against doing any wrong to his mother.

236. **Very like, very like**—Hamlet still manages to hide his feelings.

237. **With moderate haste**—without too much hurry. **Tell**—count.

239. **Grizzled**—streaked with grey.

241. **A sable silver'd**—*i. e.*, black with streaks of grey.

242. **I warrant**—I am sure.

244—245. **Hell......peace**—Hell would yawn and forbids me to speak.

247. **Be tenable**—be retained. **Let ..silence**-keep it secret.

248. **Hap**—happen.

249. **Give......tongue**—you may not all that happens but say nothing about it.

253. **Your...you**—Hamlet would have then all as friends, while they pay him their respects as to the Prince of Denmark.

254. **My father's spirit...well**--Hamlet now expresses his feeliag about the matter. It is some hidden crime and the ghost

wants to bring it into light. This is Hamlet's idea. And he is not wrong.

255. **Foul play**—crime. **Would**—I wish.

258. **Sit still**—hold yourself in patience. **Rise**—come to light, be revealed.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) Hamlet in his mourning suit, strikes a discordant note the council chamber.

(2) Attempts of the king and queen to wit him is over. Hamlet is irreconcilable. Claudius tries to smooth over matter.

(3) Hamlet's soliloquy reveals the anguish of his mind. The overhasty marriage of his mother keeps knocking at his sensitive spirit. As yet there is nothing for him to do.

(4) He is met by Horatio and Marcellus. The story of the ghosts sets him thinking. He suspects some foul play. The soliloquy is but an "uprush of self-devouring, self-exhausting, purposeless passion". But now necessity for action is coming. The ghost will make some revelation to him—and Hamlet must have to do something. From the mood of passive resignation in which his mother's conduct leaves, he is soon to be roused. Now, however, he keeps himself strictly in hand. There is no hint to Horatio of what passes in his mind.

## Scene III

**Argument** : In the farewell scene between brother and sister, Laertes warns Ophelia against the wooing of Hamlet. She will just compromise her honour by lending too credulous ear to his vows of love. She should remember that for state reasons Hamlet is not free to choose his bride. Laertes, himself lax in morals, can unctuously lay down the precept for his sister to follow. Ophelia retorts by giving her brother some pertinent advice. We should have expected Ophelia to have taken up a more defensive attitude in matters of her love, which are no business of her brother. She seems curiously passive and non-resisting. Her docility proves her undoing.

Polonius enters and cuts off their conversation. He dismisses Laertes with a farewell blessing, larded also with some moral maxims (which incidentally reflect the practical wisdom of aristocratic society in Elizabethan times). Then Polonius lashes at Ophelia, and it is in a much coarser manner that his warnings against Hamlet are delivered to her. His prying and inquisitive

manner is the worst of it all. Note also the lack of human sympathy, which should bind together father and children. He presses his daughter to reveal the secrets of her heart, and takes a certain satisfaction in doing so. Ophelia behaves like a dutiful daughter. Hers is a yielding and easily intimidated nature. She does not actually confess whether she believes or not in the honesty of Hamlet's intentions. Polonius looks at the matter in the same wordly way as his son; if Laertes does not question Hamlet's good faith Polonius dismisses Hamlet's love as a fake. Ophelia tells her father as she has no reason to think otherwise, that Hamlet has approached her in honourable fashion, Polonius scoffs at the idea. Ophelia finally agrees to drop Hamlet at her father's command. She does not break her heart over it, however. "Yet, during the whole scene an undertone of quiet sadness is apparent in the gentleness and resignation with which she submits to her father's will."

## NOTES

1. **My necessaries**—my baggage.

2. **As the winds...benefit**—N. B. These were days of sailing ships, which depended on favourable winds.

3. **Convoy**—the means of conveyance. He means that ships will sail now and then from Denmark to France. He requests Ophelia not to neglect the opportunity of writing letters to him.

5. **The trifling of his favour**—euphemism for Hamlet's light-hearted love, for Laertes takes it as such.

6. **A fashion......blood**—an impulse of the moment, and no serious affair of the heart, which a young man is apt to indulge. N. B. Laertes judges Hamlet by himself. In Paris he must have been making love to girls in the light-hearted fashion of a young man.

7—9. **A violet..minute**—a love which is no more lasting than a violet which blooms and fades away as quickly. **Primy nature**—early spring. **Forward**—blooming too quickly. **Suppliance of a minute**—*i. e.*, supplying of pleasure for a minute.

11—14. **For nature..withal**—with the growth of the body the mind grows and develops. Laertes implies that Hamlet will change his mind towards Ophelia as he grows wiser with years. **Crescent**—growing. **Thews and bulk**—physical growth and structure. **This temple**—the body which is the dwelling-place of the soul. **The inward...soul**—*i. e.*, mental development.

15. **Cautel**—deceit ; falseness. **Besmirch**—stain.

17. **His will......own**—he is not free to act ; his will is subordinate to the convenience or necessity of the state.

18. **For he ......birth**—he must do his duties and responsibilities as the Prince of the State—as heir to the throne.

20. **Carve for himself**—choose his own career. **Choice**—choice of a bride.

21. **Health**—wellbeing.

22—24. **Circumscribed**—limited. **Must his choice...... head**—in the choosing of his bride he must consult the interest and convenience of the State he is going to rule.

26—27. **As he......deed**—as he translates his words into action.

28. **The main..... Denamrk**—the permission of the King of Denmark.

30. **Credent**—credulous. **List his songs**—listen to his raptures of love.

33. **Keep...affection**—do not be too free with your affection.

34. **Shot......desire**—the risk that the passion of love may run.

35. **Chariest**—most retiring. **Prodigal**—lavish.

36. **Unmask**—disclose.

35—36. **The chariest maid......moon**—the most careful and modest maid may venture too far to expose her beauty to the moon. That is, she must carefully guard her beauty from being tempted.

37. **Virtue itself**—a chaste girl. **Calumnious strokes**—attacks of slander.

38. **Canker**—the worm that feeds on flowers. **Galls spring**—destroys spring buds.

39. **Buttons**—petals. **Disclosed**—opened.

40. **Morn......youth**—prime of youth.

41. **Contagious blastments**—*i. e.*, blights. **Imminent**—of immediate danger.

43. **Youth......mear**—youth does harm to itself without even the chance of being tempted. Youth is a time of peril when virtue is easily risked, temptation or no temptation.

44—45. **I shall......heart**—I shall carefully treasure your counsel in my heart.

46. **Ungracious pastors**—priests without any sense of shame or decency.

47. **Steep......heaven**—the hard and self-denying life that can lead to heaven.

48. **Puff'd**—bloated. **Reckless libertine**—a man given to unrestrained profligacy.

49. **Primrose......dalliance**—life of ease and wantonness.

50. **Recks .. rede**—breaks his own counsel. **Fear .. not**—do not worry about me.

52. **Grace**—favour.

53. **Occasion...... leave**—a second opportunity of taking leave of you.

54. **Aboard**—get into the ship.

55. **The wind...sail**—it is time for the ship to sail for the wind favours it.

56. **Stay'd for**—waited for.

57—58. **And these...character**—have these few maxims well inscribed in your mind. **Character**—inscribe.

N. B. Lyly's *Eupheus* may be the source of the maxims that Polonius delivers to Laertes.

**Give...tongue**—keep your thoughts to yourself.

59. **Unproportion'd**—ill-developed ; undeliberated.

60. **Vulgar**—common. Do not make yourself too cheap.

61. **Their adoption tried**—their attachment tested.

62. **Grapple......steel**—*i. e.*, hold them fast in your heart.

**Hoops of steel**—steel rings encasing a cask.

63. **Do not . entertainment**—do not freely treat everyone as your friend. The idea of making one's hand hard or callous by shaking everyone by the hand.

64. **New-hatched......comrade**—a callow youth seeking your friendship.

65. **Bring in**—being involved in a quarrel (which may lead to a duel).

66. **Bear 't**—face it boldly. **Opposed**—opponent.

67. **Ear**—attention. **Voice**—counsel.

68. **Censure**—view ; judgment. **Reserve your judgment**—withhold your own views.

69. **Habit**—dress.

70. **Not express'd......fancy**—not showy or fantastic.

71. **The apparel........man**—dress makes a man known what he is.

73. **Select......generous**—particular and expensive in their clothes. **That**—dress.

75. **Loan...friend**—giving a loan often means losing the money and the friend too.

76. **Borrowing...husbandry**—the habit of borrowing tells against thrift.

77. **To thine...true**—the idea is that he should not get into a false position in any case. To follow a principle of life consistently is to be true to oneself. But Laertes is a man not to bother about principles.

78. **Thou canst...man**—you cannot get into a false position with any.

79. **Season**—nature.

80. **Tend**—attend.

84—85. **'Tis..... it**—it is safely lodged in my memory without any chance of its slipping out.

89. **Well bethought**—that reminds me.

90. **Given...you**—spent his spare time with you.

92. **Have...bounteous**—have made yourself freely accessible to him.

93. **As...me**—as I am informed.

95. **You..... clearly**—you do not see where you stand.

96. **What .....you**—what is going on between you and Hamlet ?

97. **Tenders**—offers.

100. **Affection**—Polonius scoffs at the idea of love. He is so cynical.

**Green**—inexperienced.

101. **Unsifted... circumstance**—without a knowledge of the position you are in, involving your honour.

102. **Do......tenders**—Polonius repeats Ophelia's word—*tenders*—in a sneering tone, and shows what little respect he has for the sentiments of his daughter.

104. **A baby**—as innocent as a baby.

105. **True pay**—for the value that they should carry.

106. **Sterling**—valuable like current coins. **Tender**—take care of. Polonius plays on the sense of *tender*.

107. **Crack the wind**—the metaphor of one running out of breath.

108. **Tender..... fool**—(1) make a fool of yourself in my eyes ; (2) present me with a baby (*fool* may mean an innocent, a baby).

109. **Importuned me**—sought my love.

110. **In......fashion**—with an honest intention.

111. **Ay.........it**—Ophelia's word, *fashion*, is taken in its unfavourable sense, as Laertes say above—'hold it a fashion and a toy in blood.' *Fashion* cannot mean an honourable purpose. **Go to**—a cry of impatience.

112. **Given......speech**—upheld his words or strengthened his words.

114. **Springes**—snares. **Woodcocks**—birds known to be proverbially stupid.

115—116. **When the blood...vows**—when one is swept by passion, he is voluble in promises. **Blazes**—flames of passion.

117. **Extinct in both**-*i.e.* emitting no more light and heat.

118. **Even......promise**—even when they are ready to break forth into a burning light.

119. **For fire**—for real fire. Hamlet may be prodigal in vows ; those vows are prompted by raging passion of the moment, but it will soon blow out. Polonius warns Ophelia not to take this manifestation as real love.

120. **Be .....presence**—do not make yourself so cheap as to see Hamlet at his entreaty.

121. **Entreatments**—conversations ; interviews.

122. **Parley**—have a talk. **For**—as for.

124. **With ........tether**—with greater freedom.

125. **In few**—briefly.

126. **Brokers**—go-betweens (pimps).

127. **Investments**—dress.

128. **Implorators**..implorers. **Unholy suits**—unsanctified love.

129. **Breathing.........bonds**—assuming the appearance of innocent love. **Bonds**—love-pledger.

132. **Slander**—abuse.

133. **Come your ways**—come along.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) It is necessary to interpose such a scene before Hamlet meets the ghost—and the action of the play is set moving.

(2) A tragic fate is involved in the worldly wisdom of Polonius and Laertes—and they are little aware of it. They are overreached by their worldly wisdom. Hamlet can have little to do with love, honourable or otherwise, after he hears what the ghost reveals to him. "They lavish good advice on each other

but the dark machine is already moving, in which they are, all three, to be caught and broken."

"This scene reveals Shakespeare's mastery in the presentation, half ironical and half tragic, of the pathos of daily life. For when as here, the tender growth of first love is callously trampled upon by those grown materialistic with advancing years, complacent in their wide experience of life and cynical worldly knowledge, then there is underlying tragedy, whether the victim is fully conscious of it or not. On the other hand, the petty and undignified attitude of Polonius, particularly when his vanity is touched, has an extremely comic side. It is not without reason that Hamlet declares later on (III. i), that the old man plays the fool in his own house".

—*Schucking.*

## Scene IV

**Argument.** As in the opening scene, it is a cold night only in the distance a noise of revelry comes, from within the castle, followed by the sound of trumpets and discharging guns Hamlet watches with the guards. They naturally talk of what is going on inside the castle. Hamlet sharply criticizes the vice of drunkenness, bringing the Danes into disrepute abroad. It is by the way of local and national colour Note again Hamlet's aptitude for generalization when starting from his view of Danish intemperance he reasons how a small blemish may often discredit a man otherwise accomplished. These reflections reveal true humanity of feeling, for he remarks how men have been unjustly condemned for a single blemish in character, which they owe to nature or to accident.

Suddenly the ghost appears. Hamlet cries out in horror. We see how high-strung Hamlet is, and how he is shaken to the very core of his being. He, the sceptic, involuntarily invokes the protection of angels. The ghost has lost a good deal of his horror for the stoical Horatio. Hamlet soon recovers himself. The next moment he addresses the ghost, he gives his words a certain objectivity. He asks the meaning of this visitation. He feels drawn towards his father's spirit, though in his sub-conscious region the repulsion, caused by the image of the risen corpse—the macabre to which he is so highly sensitive—is stirring. He is again in his generalizing vein, and he is so rapt up that Horatio has to call his attention to the fact that the ghost is beckoning him. However his companions warn him. Hamlet follows the ghost. Hamlet has little fear for life and little value

for him. Horatio is afraid that the ghost might lure him to the edge of a cliff which might set his brain reeling, and shatter the framework of reason. Hamlet follows the ghost, as if it were the summons of his Fate.

## NOTES

1. **Shrewdly**—keenly ; piercingly.
2. **Eager**—sharp ; biting.
3. **It ..... twelve**—it is short of twelve.
5. **Season**—period of time.
6. **Wont**—habit ; custom.
8. **Wake**—carouse.
9. **Wassail**-revelry, literally,health-drinking. **Swaggering**—with wild, fantastic movement. **Upspring**—a kind of wild dance.
10. **Drains**—gulps. **Rhenish**—Rhine wine.
11. **Kettle-drum**—the kettle-drum—a drum, consisting of a large bowl of copper or brass with parchment, stretched over the opening was the national instrument of music for the Danes. **Bray out**—announce in clamorous voice.
12. **The triumph of his pledge**—the achievement of health-drinking or revelry. Said ironically.
15. **To the manner born**—brought up on the same tradition.
16. **More honour'd ...observance**—greater credit in breaking the custom than in observing it.
17. **Heavy-headed revel**-drunkenness that dulls our brains.
18. **Traduced**—slandered. **Tax'd of**—condemned by.
19. **Clepe**—call. **Swinish phrase**—abusive words.

20—22. **Soil our addition**—besmirch our reputation. **It takes...attribute**—our evil repute for drunkenness robs us of all credit for any great thing done by us. **Perform'd at height**—accomplished in excellent manner. **Pith and marrow**—substance. **Attribute**—reputation ; what is due to the performer.

24. **Mole of nature**—natural blemish.
25. **Wherein......guilty**-for which they cannot be blamed. N. B Here again Hamlet displays his habit of generalization and also his feeling of humanity.
26. **Since nature...origin**—one cannot have a choice in the matter of birth.
27. **O'ergrowth...complexion**—predominance of particular trait of character or disposition. **Complexion**—means tempera-

ment as determined by the relative proportion of the four humours—blood (sanguine), phlegm (phlegmatic), choler (choleric), melancholy.

28. **Oft breaking...reason**—overthrowing reason (impairing reason).

29—30. **Some habit..... manners**—*i. e.*, a practice or behaviour that makes pleasing manners rather effusively pleasing (and so introduces an element of insincerity). The idea of carrying plausibility of manners so far.

32. **Being...star**—owing their defect of character to nature or to the accident of birth (starry influence). **Liver**—literally things delivered, then the allowance of food and clothes to servants and retainers. So the defect of character is the gift of nature to the man concerned. **Fortune's star**—*i.e.*, due to the influence of the star presiding at birth.

**Star**—quibblingly refers to the starry mark on a horse's forehead.

33. **Be they...grace**-however without blemish these virtues are.

34. **Undergo**—experience. **As infinite ..undergo**—however boundless in scope these virtues may be.

35—36. **Shall... fault**—will be neutralized, in the public opinion, by that single defect.

36—39. **The dram of eale...scandal**—*Eale* may be explained as evil or reproach. The sense will be : A mere touch of evil is enough to discredit a man, and whatever virtues he may possess will come to nothing. As Verity puts it, "the small admixture of evil degrades the whole body of good to the level of its own disgrace." Some read *dout* or *do out* (*i. e.*, destroy for 'doubt').

**Angels......us**—"Hamlet invokes the protection of angels against the ghost. For a moment, the sceptic forgets himself.

40. **A spirit of health**—a good spirit. **Goblin damn'd**—an evil spirit.

41. **Blasts**—unwholesome airs.

42. **Charitable**—kind ; loving.

43. **Questionable shape**—the shape of his father, and therefore, Hamlet must question the ghost.

46. **Let...ignorance**—it is the idea of his heart leaping into his mouth at the suspense, which only be relieved by the ghost's communication.

47. **Canonized**—buried according to the Church's rule. **Hearsed**—coffined ; buried.

48. **Cerements**—grave-clothes. **Sepulchre**—tomb. **Inurn'd**—interred.

51. **Steel**—steel-armour.

53. **Revisit'st .....moon**—appear to our sight on earth in moonlight.

45. **Making .....hideous**—imparting ghastly terror to the night. **Fools of nature** (1) playthings of nature ; (2) mortal creature with limited understanding.

55. **To shake......disposition**—to agitate and perplex us.

56. **With thoughts......souls**—with enigmas which are impenetrable to us.

57. **Why is this**—Hamlet wants to know why the ghost has appeared.

59. **Impartment**—communication.

60. **Courteous action**—graceful movement.

61. **Removed**—remote.

65. **I do . fee**—I give little value to my life. When a moment ago Hamlet invoked the protection of angels, he was afraid of the safely of his soul. Bodily risk is of no concern to him. So he wants to follow the ghost, whatever the risk.

68. **Waves......again**—beckons me.

69. **Flood**—sea.

71. **Beetles o'er**—overhangs.

73. **Deprive . reason**—paralyse your reason. **Sovereignty of reason**—the supreme power of reason.

74. **Draw...madness**—drive you into a frenzy.

75. **Toys of desperation**—desperate fancies.

76. **Without...motive**—against the will ; without any more incitement of the will.

81. **Be ruled**—take our advice. **My fate cries out**—it is the case of my fate.

82. **Artery**—vein.

83. **Hardy**—bold. **Nemean's lion's never**—the skin of the lion at Nemea was impenetrable to darts of any kind. **Nerve**—sinew ; muscle.

84. **Unhand me**—release my hand.

85. **I 'll...me**—it is a ghost summon ng Hamlet, and his companions warn him not to go fearing that it might mean

Hamlet's destruction. Hamlet threatens, that he is going to make a ghost of them if they intervene. The levity of his remark is born of his horror.

89. **Have after**—I will follow Hamlet. **Issue**—result.

90. **Something ..Denmark**—N. B. There is yet an uncrystallized opinion in the minds of people, not alone of Hamlet, that there is something fundamentally wrong in the state, that Denmark is under evil influence.

91. **Heaven...it**—God will reveal it, as through the agency of the ghost.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) Hamlet's generalization in the matter of a single defect in character undoing all the virtues that a man may possess must have been a result of self-introspection. He must be thinking of himself and not of Claudius. The abstract discussion seems to drain away all emotion from the scene at present.

(2) Note again the doubt that assails Hamlet's mind when he first sees the ghost ; the doubt will keep recurring to him again and again. Then, his determination arises to have the matter finally settled with the ghost. "My fate cries out." Unconsciously he is drawn to the message which the ghost has to deliver, and connects it with his own action in future.

## SCENE V

**Argument :** When Hamlet is alone with the ghost, the latter, being in torment and meeting one who had loved him dearly, pours out his heart to him. What little he says about the suffering he has to undergo, has an overwhelming effect on Hamlet. Then the ghost discloses the secret of his murder—the diabolical way in which it was done—and it arouses in Hamlet the passsion for revenge. There is a hint of his bitter disillusionment about the queen, who seems to have craved extra indulgence of her passion (and there is the impression of the queen's adultery before his murder). But the ghost, however, impelled by the thought of revenge, is not without some tender feeling for the queen, he would like mercy shown her—a rare touch of tolerance in him.

The anguish of the ghost is most poignantly expressed. Not only are his words charged with the deepest feeling, but they sound like those of one desperatelly ill, recounting his sufferings in details. His character is barely sketched, but his heartfelt words of love for the faithless queen, and his request to Hamlet, show his

nobility. Hamlet responds with a passionate cry. He resolves to carry out his father's wish, no matter what it may cost. Claudius appears to him a damned villain—and that because of his consummate hypocrisy—his apparent benevolence contrasting with the baseness of his disposition.

Still reeling under the influence of his terrifying experience, he affects a morbid gaiety when he meets his friends. He is going to share his secret with none. Horatio feels a little hurt that Hamlet cannot take him into confidence over the ghost. Hamlet makes excuses to him. Then in the cellarage scene he forces them into secrecy. The ghost himself takes part in it, a piquant gruesome touch being given to the whole affair, and all the time Hamlet keeps jesting. Hamlet only seriously begs of Horatio that he should make no comment on his further behaviour, howsoever odd it may appear. He may "put an antic disposition on"—but that should be no concern of his friends. The only hint he drops of anything revealed to him by the ghost is that there is something seriously in Denmark and that unfortunately it is for him to set it right.

## NOTES

2. **Mark me**—these words are an earnest appeal to Hamlet.

3—4. **When I...myself**—the ghost reveals his suffering in hell ; he must go back to hell-fire which consumes him day and night. **Sulphurous**—sulphur is the cause of fire in hell.

6. **Bound**—prepared. **So art ..revenge**—the ghost at once urges Hamlet to revenge without giving any details.

10. **Doom'd**—destined. **Term**—period. **Walk the night**—walk out of my grave at night.

11. **Fast in fire**—to go without food is one of the punishments in hell, added to the torment from fire.

12—13. **Till the foul crimes...away**—until full expiation has been done for the crimes in my mortal life

14. **To tell ..prison-house**—to reveal all that goes on in hell where my soul is now confined.

15–16. **I could...soul**—the story that I could tell would fill your soul with distress. **Freeze ..blood**—make you shiver.

17. **Start spheres**—the spheres are concentric, transparent hollow globes, imagined by older astronomers as revolving round the earth and respectively carrying with them the several heavenly bodies ; here the idea is that the eyes will bulge

out from their sockets like the heavenly bodies dislodged from their spheres.

18. **Thy knotted...part**—your mass of hair to divide.

20. **Porpentine**—porcupine.

21. **Eternal blazon**—*i. e.* the story of hell suffering.

23. **If thou.....love**—another appeal to Hamlet's love and duty.

25. **Revenge.......murder**—the ghost springs a surprise upon Hamlet. No details are given at first, nor anything is told about the reason of the murder.

29—31. **With wings revenge**—Hamlet promises to execute revenge without any intervening delay. But he miscalculates. The king gives him no chance. Then his doubt about the ghost returns. **As swift......love**—nothing can be quicker than the movement of thought. **Apt**—forward enough to do your duty.

32—3. **And duller...wharp**—you should be more feelingless and insensitive than the weeds that grow on the shore of Lethe. Lethe is the river of forgetfulness in Hades.

37. **Forged process**—fabrication.

38. **Rankly abused**—grossly deceived.

40. **O my prophetic soul**—his instinct seemed to have suspected some foul play.

41. **Incestuous**—Claudius was incestuous because he married his brother's wife. **Adulterate**—he committed adultery with his queen before his death.

43. **Witchcraft of his wit**—his fascinating power of speech accomplishments.

44—45. **O wicked gifts...seduce**—the ghost curses Claudius's plausible gifts and accomplishments that could lead his queen astray.

46. **Most......queen**—now he realizes that his queen's virtue was a mere show.

47. **Falling off**—decline from virtue.

48—50. **Of that dignity... marriage**—exalted in nature that my love kept closest to the marriage vow. **Decline**—the idea of self-degradation by her choice of such a fellow.

53—57. **But virtue ..garbage**—a really virtuous woman will not be tempted by a lustful person, however he may put on sanctified manners, and so lust, lodged in an angelic woman will be averse to holy love and seek satisfaction from wantonness. **Sate itself**—*i. e*, have satiety.

61. **Secure hour**—unsuspecting hour.

62. **Hebenon**—henbane.

64. **Leperous distilment**—a fluid that caused my skin to appear like that of a leper.

65. **Holds...man**-has such a deadly influence upon human blood.

68. **Posset**—curdle.

69. **Eager**—sour.

71. **Tetter**—scurf. **Bark'd about**—spread like a bark upon a tree.

72. **Lazar-like**—like a leper. **Crust**—incrustation.

76. **Cut off...sin**—killed when I was flush with my sin.

77. **Unhousel'd**—not having received the holy sacrament. **Disappointed**—not appointed ; therefore unprepared. **Unaneled**—not having received the sacrament of extreme unction.

78—79. **No reckoning...head**—before I could settle my accounts with God, I was sent to death, charged with all my sins.

81. **If...thee**—if you have human feeling.

83—84. **Luxury**—lasciviousness. **Let not...incest**—his own bed had been defiled by the lust and incest of Claudius, and he implorest Hamlet to avenge the insult.

85. **Taint...mind**—let not your mind be affected against your mother. Note the ghost's tender feeling for the Queen in spite of her moral lapse.

86—88. **Leave...her**—no action is to be taken against the queen ; let her conscience deal with her. **Thorns...hedge**—*i.e.*, the reproaches of conscience within her.

89. **Matin**—morning.

90. **Gins**— begins. **Pale...fire**—lose the brightness of its glow which is inaffective or useless in the light of dawn.

91. **Host of heaven**—angels. **What else**-what else should he invoke ? Should he invoke hell also ? His doubt returns. Is it a spirit from hell ? A student at Wittenberg, he has been familiar with speculation on the matter, and cannot easily dismiss his sceptical view of the spirit-world.

92. **Coule**—include. **Hold...heart**—he bids his heart be patient.

93. **Sinews**—nerves.

94. **Bear...up**—support me, though they are in the act of paralysis.

96—97. **While memory...globe**—*i.e.*, to long as he is capable of remembering anything while his mind is distracted or confounded by what he has heard—the baffling mystery of Claudius's crime. **Globe**—Hamlet points to his head.

98. **Table**—tablet.

99. **Trivial**—insignificant. **Fond**—foolish. **Records**—stored up impressions.

100. **Saws**-maxims. **Pressures**—*i. e.*, impressions.

104. **Unmixed...matter**—isolated from such impression as had accumulated in his mind in the past.

105. **O...woman**—N.B. He first thinks of his mother, who was so easy a prey to the villainy of Claudius. He remembers the ghost's words—'lust, though to a radiant angel link'd.' His mother was guilty too.

106. **O villain...villain**—Claudius is no ordinary villain, but one who can mask his villainy in fair words and plausible manner—a villain who has deceived Hamlet and all the people of Denmark. The ghost's words—"the whole ear of Denmark ......rankly abused ;" also his "witchcraft of wit."

107. **Tables**—tablets; memorandum book. **Meet**—proper. **My tables............down**—N. B. The writing down of this in his memorandum book may seem to be an insensate or meaningless action. But it is often a fact that the tension of mind is relaxed by resorting to some trivial or meaningless action. For example, when a man is deep in thought, and extremely perplexed, he will start drawing figures in the dust at his feet. This trival action saves Hamlet from madness.

110. **There you are**—I know the kind of man I have to deal with. **Word**—watchward. He implies his pledge to fulfil the task imposed upon him by tho ghost. The ghost's parting words are a bond between the two.

116. **Hillo, ho ho**—a falconer's cry to his hawk. N. B. Hamlet at once is on his guard. He must not betray to his friends anything of what he has heard from the ghost. This is necessary for his own safety, and to enable him to carry out his plan of revenge. He assumes now a light, flippant mood as his friends approach him.

119. **O, wonderful**—Hamlet puts off his friends with this word, answering to its sceptical mood of Horatio He has got to satisfy Horatio about the ghost, but does not mind Marcellus. **No...it**--how Hamlet fences about it.

121. **Would heart...it**—He keeps up the idea of the wonderful phenomenon that the ghost is. He wants to give a light turn to the whole affair, and keep his friends off the track.

123—124. **There 's...knave**—Hamlet refers to no particular person. It is a vague, general remark. And it could have needed no ghost to convince Hamlet of it. The fact is that he cannot, for a moment, dismiss the thought of Claudius's subtle villainy from his mind.

125—126. **There needs...this**—Horatio is not satisfied with this explanation. It is not Horatio's praying nature. After all that he has speculated about the visit of the ghost—the ghost being none other than Hamlet's father, whom he regards as the precursor of some impending evil, he will certainly desire to be satisfied about the ghost. **Why...right**—Hamlet admits the force of Horatio's argument.

127. **Circumstance**—circumlocution.

128. **I hold...part**–Hamlet wants to rebuff Horatio politely.

129. **You...point you**—you may attend to your own business as you please.

132. **I 'll go pray**—These words seem to be unaccountable. Hamlet already puts on an antic disposition. He baffles his friends by his words and action. Of course, if he keeps his own counsel, it is none of their business. **Wild...words**—*i. e.*, baffling words.

135. **There 's...offence**—I take no offence. But all the same Horatio is hurt.

136. **Saint Patrick**—it is suggested that Hamlet swears by Saint Patrick in reference to the rumour that his father was bitten by a serpent. St. Patrick vanished serpents from Ireland. So. St. Patrick was the saint to deal with such a matter. Hamlet deliberately mystifies his friends. His words have, however, reference to the ghost's revelation.

137. **Much offence too**—Hamlet takes up Horatio's word, but *offence* has a double meaning—the offence he has given Horatio by withholding from him the truth and the offence *i.e.*, the crime of Claudius. **Touching this vision**—as regards the ghost.

138. **Honest ghost**—*i. e.*, not a bad spirit.

139—140. **For your desire...may**—as for your desire to know what the ghost communicated to me, you should suppress your curiosity.

145. **In faith**—Horatio objects to swearing. Perhaps it would be impious to swear in such circumstances. And when

Horatio and his companion yield on this point, they do not swear in the words, proposed by Hamlet.

150. **True...penny**—honest fellow.

151. **Your hear...cellarage**—The voice of the ghost comes from underground. Note the jocular tone of Hamlet. Hamlet wants to give his friends the impression that the ghost was a laughing matter after all.

156. **Hic et ubique**—here and everywhere. "The repetition of the oath, the shifting of the ground and the Latin phrase are taken from the ceremonies of conjurers"—*Tschischuritz*.

161. **Old mole**—addressed to the ghost, moving about underground. Later, he uses 'pioneer'. A pioneer is a digger or miner. Both *mole* and *pioneer* may refer to superstition that devils work underground like miners. Hamlet keeps up his jocular attitude to prevent his friends from suspecting the truth about the ghost.

164. **This is wondrous strange**—Has it anything to do with Hamlet's remark—"O, wonderful!" Horatio means today that events have taken such a turn. Hamlet and Horatio are now walking apart from Marcellus.

165. **As a stranger**—as one not interested in what is happening at present. Hamlet plays on Horatio's words—*strange*.

166—167. **There are...philosophy**—N. B. This is again in reply to Horatio's words *wondrous strange*. Horatio is a student of philosophy. Hamlet wants to say that his philosophy cannot fathom the matter.

168. **But come**—Now Hamlet talks seriously to Horatio. **So...mercy**—provided you do not betray me may God's mercy aid you!

170. **How strange...myself**—how puzzling or unaccountable my conduct may appear later.

171. **Meet**—proper.

172. **Antic**—fantastic.

174. **Thus encumber'd**—Hamlet imitates the action by folding his arms.

175. **By pronouncing...phrase** *i. e.*, by some insinuation.

176. **As if**—equivalent to if.

178. **Ambiguous giving out**—words that mean either this or that. **Note**—signify.

180. **So grace......you**—so may you be blessed by God!

184. **With all my love......you**—I offer my whole-hearted friendship to you.

185. **So poor man**—a covert allusion it may be to his being kept out from the throne of Denmark as well as to his incapacity to deal with the evil he encounters.

186. **Friending**—friendship.

188. **Still ..lips**—as a sign of secrecy.

189—190. **The time...right**—N. B. He realizes the gravity of his task. The crime of Claudius, involving the murder of his father and the seduction of his mother, affects not himself alone, but the whole state of Denmark. The task he is charged with is to set Denmark free from the mortal depravity and degradation; and this he considers a superhuman task. It is not a matter of reforming the people. He has got to root out the vice and corruption at the Court of Denmark, and establish a new order. He curses his fate for being set to such a task.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) The ghost's communication portrays the infamy of the queen's adultery and the foul crime of poisoning which added to the cry of the ghost.

O, horrible ! O, horrible ! most horrible ! have their due effect upon Hamlet.

(2) Hamlet hardly recovers from this shattering revelation, however, he may assume a tactful but apparently light-hearted pose with his friends soon. He thinks first of his mother's guilt and then the depth of Claudius's villainy confronts him :

That one may smile and smile and be a villain. "But the simple steadying of the hand to write the words does steady his mind."

(3) The final words of the scene "sum up the essence of the whole tragedy"—

The time is out of joint : O cursed spite !

The task could have been simpler if he had taken Horatio into confidence, and planned the revenge. But the problem was greater than that. He had to root out the evil of the times. And with his scrupulous sense of what is fair and right he cannot at once deal with Claudius's crime until he has more positive proof than the mere words of a ghost.

## ACT II, SCENE I

**Argument** : Polonius is sending his son money and letters by an old and trusted retainer, and gives him necessary instructions marked by his long-winded complacency. His reasoning, over-elaborated, proves too much for himseif and poor Reynaldo—

and sometimes he loses the thread, which Reynaldo again picks up for him. His senile loquacity apart, the old man is an inquisitive busy body who wants to find out something about his son's conduct abroad. His intelligence is limited and his principles are lax. He allows freedom to his son in sexual matters, which seems to offend Reynaldo's taste. (By the way it reflects the difference between the moral views held in England at the time in aristocratic circles and amongst ordinary people) It may be noted that the scene suggests that some weeks have elapsed since the events last witnessed. Act III comes four months after the old King Hamlet's death, while the play itself begins two months after the event.

After Polonius dismisses Reynaldo, enters Ophelia. She is greatly upset, and tells her father that Hamlet has visited her in a state of mental derangement. She vividly describes Hamlet's *dishabille* ; his mute and alarming gestures, and his fixed stare at her if to read her inmost thoughts ; his look of stark despair and profound sigh, and then his withdrawing, "with his head over his shoulder turn'd." Now Polonius discovers the clue to Hamlet's trouble. It rejected love that has affected his reason—and it has resulted from Ophelia breaking off her relations with Hamlet according as Polonius wished.

Of course, we understand why Hamlet behaved so with Ophelia. It is the antic disposition he proposed to put on—and it is the first demonstration. This intended to put Claudius and Polonius off the scent. Polonius is unhappy that he was mistaken about Hamlet's sincerity of love : "I am sorry that with better heed and judgment I had not quoted him." He is going to make up for it. He proceeds at once with Ophelia to see the king on Hamlet's mental trouble and alienation from his mother and uncle.

## NOTES

4. **To make...behaviour**—A hint that Reynaldo should privately inquire about the wild oats Laertes is sowing in Paris.

6—9. **Look you, sir**—Polonius is not satisfied with giving a hint to Reynaldo. When he finds Reynaldo to be of the same mind as himself, he enters into details of procedure that Reynaldo should follow. **How...what means**—how they live there, who they are, and what is their financial condition. **Where they keep**—where they reside. **What expense**—what company they keep, and how much they spend on entertainments.

10. **Encompassment ..question**—circumventions and indirect questions.

12. **Than . it**—than direct questions will achieve the results. If he puts direct questions, the person questioned might withhold information.

13. **Take**—assume. **Some...him**—*i. e.*, claim no more than nodding acquaintance with the subject of your inquiry.

18. **Wild**--dissipated.

19. **Addicted so and so**—addicted to such and such vices. What these vices are, it is left to Reynaldo to invent. **Put on**—ascribe to.

20. **Forgeries**—vices invented. **Rank**—outrageous.

22. **Wanton**—licentious. **Slips**—errors.

23—24. **As are .....liberty**—as accompany a young man enjoying freedom. **Gaming**—gambling.

25. **Fencing**—sword-play. It was looked upon as disreputable in Elizabethan times. **Quarrelling**—quarrelling usually led to a dual.

26. **Drabbing**—going after bad woman.

28. **Season**—qualify.

31. **Quaintly**—ingeniously ; artfully ; delicately.

32. **Taints of liberty**—outgrowths of freedom, enjoyed by young people ; aberrations resulting from freedom enjoyed.

33. **The flash mind**—the exuberance of impetuous youth.

34. **Savageness**—unrestrained and disorderly behaviour. **Unreclaimed**—untamed.

35. **Of assault**—such as generally assail a young man.

37. **Here 's my drift**—this what I am driving at.

38. **Fetch of warrant**—a device that may lead to expected results

39. **Sullies**—blemishes of character.

40. **A little...working**—(1) appearing a little worse than the actual ; (2) quite stale or commonplace as in practice.

41. **Your... converse**—the person to whom you talk. **Sound**—find the bearings of.

42. **Prenominate**—before mentioned.

44. **Closes with you**—agrees with you. **Consequence**—effect.

47. **Addition**—title.

49. **And then ..does**—Polonius loses the thread of his discourse.

50. **By the mass**—An oath, Mass is the celebration of the Holy Communion.

57. **Or...then**—on such and such occasions. **With...such**

—with such and such companions.

58. **O'ertook in 's rouse**—*i e.,* caught while he was drunk.

59. **Falling out**—quarrelling. We may be reminded of quarrel between Sir Philip Sidney and Earl of Oxford.

60. **House of sale**—brothel.

61. **Videlicet**—namely.

63. **Carp**—ftesh water fish of inferior food value, but noted for vivid colour. **Your bait...truth**—by using falsehood as a bait you catch truth.

64. **Reach**—capacity.

65. **Windlasses**—winding turns ; circuitous ways **Assays of bias**—*bias* is the oblique line of motion of a bowl (it is a metaphor from howling), the howl is sent rolling in a curved line instead of being directed straight at the jack. The phrase means indirect attempts

67. **Lecture**—discourse.

71. **Observe...yourself**—*i. e.*, study him personally, and do not be satisfied with the result of inquires from others. **In your self**—for yourself.

72. **Ply his music**—"let him go on to what tune he pleases" (*Clarke*).

77. **Closet**—private room.

78. **Doublet**—inner garment worn in Elizabethan times—close-fitting, and with skirts reaching below the girdle. **Unbraced**—unfastened.

80. **Down gyved**—fallen to the ankle like fetters.

81. **His knees other**—unsteady in motion.

82. **Purport**—meaning.

84. **To speak of horrors**—What affected Ophelia most and as very startling was that Hamlet came up to her and took her by the wrist, and would not let her go.

85. **Mad.. love**—the court rumour is that Hamlet has gone mad. The king and queen are, as Polonius knows, worried over it. Lately he forbade Ophelia to have anything to do with Hamlet. Ophelia obediently barred herself away from Hamlet. Polonius now naturally concludes that rejected love turned Hamlet mad.

89. **With his..brow**—Ophelia imitates the action of Hamlet.

90. **Perusal**—intense study.

91. **As...it**—as if he would draw my face.

93. **Thrice......down**—Ophelia shows how Hamlet shook his head up and down.

95. **Shatter......bulk**—smash his frame.

99—100. **For out.........me**-he left the room, all the time looking back at me, and so without using his sight—and I could not forget his glaring look at me. Here is the picture of a typical madman. He is feigning madness to put all off the scent. He does well to give Ophelia a fright for he knows that it will set Polonius's overactive brain acting. So he will be confirmed a mad man.

102. **Ecstasy**—madness.

103. **Whose violent...itself**—which in its violence is self-destructive. **Property**— character, nature or that which peculiar to itself. **Fordoes**—destroys.

104. **Leads...undertakings**—ill-directs the will to violent deeds.

109—110. **Repel his letters**—reject his letters. **Denied ......me**—did not let him see me.

111. **With...judgment**—with more caution and discretion.

112. **Quoted**—observed. **He did trifle**—his intention was not serious.

113. **Beshrew my jealousy**—Polonius now curses his suspicion.

114—117. **It is as proper ..discretion**—It is characteristic of old men like ourselves to be overwise and so defeat the ends as it is characteristic of young people to act rashly and impulsively. **Cast beyond**—overshoot.

118—119. **Kept close**—kept hidden. **Might move...love**—might be a cause of trouble by keeping it hidden, though it might make the king angry to hear of Hamlet's love.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) Polonius with his crooked and underhand way of doing things sets the tone for the Court of Denmark. On hearing Ophelia's recital of Hamlet's strange behaviour, he at once goes to see the king with Ophelia. The court intrigue will be on now, Hamlet being its centre

(2) In spite of feigning of madness, there is manifested deep feeling is all that Hamlet says and does. His leave-taking of Ophelia is genuinely sorrowful.

(3) Ophelia is rather curiously impersonal in her account of Hamlet's behaviour. She might have receded farther away from Hamlet after she had been lectured by her brother and father. She bows to what her father tells her, and suggests for

her to do. Here she might have her awareness of Hamlet's emotional tension. But she remains passive and readily accepts the superficial explanation offered by her father.

SCENE II

**Argument**: Hamlet's madness seems to be now a fact. The king summons two friends of Hamlet to court—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and assigns of them their task. It is to divert Hamlet and at the same time to find out what it is that troubles him. In fact, they are to spy upon Hamlet. All that they are told is that Hamlet is mentally disordered and suffers from some kind of obsession. Neither of them can have the remotest idea of the solicitude of the king whether Hamlet knows anything of his blood-guilt. So they can but grope in the dark.

Polonius enters to announce the return of the ambassadors from Norway, and prepares the king for the communication that he has to make about Hamlet. The king is more interested in this than in what the ambassadors have to report. But as Polonius desires the ambassadors are received first, and the king hears of the happy outcome of the negotiations.

Polonius now begins with a tedious opening, in which he indulges in figures of speech, play on words, and ridiculous logic. The queen tries to cut him short in vain ; nothing can stem his torrent of words. At last, Polonius produces a love-letter, addressed by Hamlet to Ophelia. The king is startled by this revelation. He wants to know how far this love-affair has gone. Polonius proceeds to trace Hamlet's malady of love, stage by stage since Ophelia's rejecting of Hamlet under his command. In their sequence, he puts the symptom—dejection, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, weakness and lack of blood in the brain—a fair picture of nervous disease. Hamlet's habit of walking up and down the gallery of the castle for hours on end belongs to the same category. Claudius is not satisfied, and demands further proofs. And finally, as a test of his view, Polonius proposes to bring about, as if by chance, a meeting between Hamlet and his daughter, at which he will play the eavesdropper with the king.

When Hamlet comes in reading a book, Polonius goes up to him. To test his mental state, Polonius straightaway asks Hamlet whether he (Hamlet) recognizes him. He bewilders Polonius by calling him a fishmonger. He plays the role of one mentally deranged, discoursing on subjects dear to a melancholy man—how rare honesty is in the world, and how infection

is ripe everywhere, even the sun 'breeding magots in a dead dog.' Then with a sudden deflection of thought, he asks about his daughter and advises him to keep her away from all contact with the world.

Polonius is easily taken in. He believes that he is right in his diagnosis. He remembers that he had suffered as much when he was love-stricken. But he must be doubly sure. He inquires what Hamlet is reading. Hamlet puts him off with paradoxical phrases and launches into invectives against Polonius's senility, hinting at a chance of rejuvenation if he could go backwards like a crab. Polonius notices that there is a kind of logic in his talk, however, his thoughts may wander. But he remains convinced of his madness He misses the note of anguish in Hamlet's words—even when he turns to leave the gallery, answering the question as to whether he will 'walk out of the air,' with the words 'into my grave.'

When Hamlet next meets Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, for the moment he drops the pretence of madness, and greets them fairly. But Hamlet is quick to perceive their dissembling. He sighs that he does not enjoy sufficient freedom, and when his friends want to assure him that it is otherwise, he points out that what is true for them need not be true for him, 'for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.' Rosencrantz hints that Hamlet is suffering from unsatisfied ambition. Hamlet repudiate the suggestion, but admits that he has 'bad dreams'. Guildenstern elaborates the idea of ambition, but it does not cover the mental condition of Hamlet. Hamlet clinches the argument by identifying glory (the object of ambition), which is but a shadow with ambition itself; the conclusion is that an unambitious person is alone possessed of reality and the beggar is the real prototype of ambition, so after all kings are the shadows of beggars. Hamlet then begs them to accompany him to the court, and demands to know what they are doing in Denmark. Their reply that they have come solely on his account does not satisfy him, and meets with ironical thanks. He goes on questioning them, and at last they have to confess that they have been sent for. And just to throw them off from spying—for they were not there for any other purpose—he indulges in pessimistic generalization (which as usual betray the rift within his spirit). His intellect appraises the visible beauty of the world and the god-like qualities of man but as his intellect lacks contact with his emotions, such thing seems to be mean-

ingless to him. He notes that his exposition of things is greeted with smiles by his friends. When he says that he has lost all delight in man (*i. e.*, mankind) his friends assume that he does not include woman. Incidentally, they remind him of a troop of players they have met on the way.

His thought is suddenly deflected again And his attention is engaged by the players of the time. He asks them why they are on tour and when he hears that the competition of the children's companies have ousted them from favour, he condemns the new fashion. (The fact that Shakespeare suddenly breaks into the argument of the play in order to insert a topical reference to the successful competition of the child-players at the Blackfriars Theatre, and to the wrangling, of the playwrights in the so-called 'War of Theatres' that was loosely connected with it, points to a strong personal interest in the events alluded to.)

Hamlet greets the players warmly when they arrive conscious that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern might note the difference in his reception of the players he welcomes them again rather effusively. He describes his mental state as depending on the direction of the wind. Hamlet's mood changes again when Polonius enters He cannot stand Polonius at all. Hamlet starts singing snatches of ballads, containing references to Jephthah and his daughter, which Polonius takes as an allusion to himself and Ophelia.

Now he turns to the players, and seems to forget everything else. He welcomes each one with friendly chaff, and begs impatiently of them an exhibition of their art in delivering a tragic speech. He himself chooses a passage which he seems to admire—and begins to declaim it. It describes the fearful capture and burning of Troy, and the slaying of Priam by Pyrrhus and the lamentations of Hecuba. It is in a style farthest from Shakespeare's marked as it is by hyperbole, crude exaggeration, and rhetorical vehemence Perhaps, Hamlet admires it because it rouses deep compassion at the destruction of what is noble.

Polonius, who certainly looks upon himself as a connoisseur of dramatic art, praises Hamlet's declamation. The actor's speech proves too long, and Polonius complains of it, and meets with a rebuff from Hamlet. After it is finished Hamlet turns to Polonius, requesting him to see to it that the players are taken care of. He warns Polonius that if he is mindful of his

reputation, he should not neglect the players, for they might caritaure him while he was living. He takes the first player aside, and arranges with him to insert a speech, composed by himself, into the text of a piece they are to perform the next day. He then dismisses the players with a friendly warning not to mock Polonius, and then he takes leave of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with formal politeness.

Now follows the second important soliloquy. The repressed excitement roused in Hamlet by the player's speech, now breaks out. In this soliloquy, he castigates himself. He begins to feel that he has unconsciously been false to his solemn oath to concern himself with nothing but revenge. The player's emotion at the fate of Hecuba stirs his conscience. The player can be moved so deeply by a fictitious disaster, while he, having good grounds to work himself up, remains inactive. He charges himself with cowardice and lack of self-respect. From a searching self-examination, he turns to Claudius whose actions have brought about such fearful inner strife in him. This violent internal conflict finally leads to a kind of purging. He comes to a decision, and it is an important preliminary step to revenge. The ghost might be an evil spirit. He knows that he is weak, and that he suffers from serious mental depression ; and is afraid that he may the more easily be made a victim of hellish arts. So he is going to test the guilt of the king with the effect of the play next day—thereby resolving all doubt about the ghost.

## NOTES

3—4. **The need . ...sending**—we sent for you so hastily because we need your services.

5. **Hamlet's transformation**—the change that has taken place in Hamlet—his mental derangement.

6—7. **Sith**-since. **Nor the exterior... was**-both externally and internally Hamlet has changed completely from what he was.

7—10. **What is should of**—I cannot imagine that anything else than his father's death could have so upset him.

12. **Neighbour'd**—closely associated. **Humour**—disposition.

13. **Vouchsafe rest**—please to stay.

15. **To draw...pelasures**—to entice him to amusements.

15—18. **To gather... remedy**—This is the more important part of their work—to elicit from Hamlet, as chance offers, such things as remain unknown to the king, but trouble Hamlet, and these being discovered, it is for the king to see whether any-

thing could be done to remove the trouble of Hamlet's mind. **Open'd** -disclosed. **Lies... remedy**—can be set right.

21. **Adheres**—is attached.

22. **Gentry**—courtesy.

23. **Expend**—spend.

24. **The supply...hope**—the performance of the benefit that we are expecting from your assciation with Hamlet

27. **By...us**—by exercise of supreme authority that you have over us.

28—29. **Put...entreaty**—*i. e.* command the satisfaction of your will and pleasure rather than entreat it.

30. **Bent**—inclination.

31. **To lay ..feet**—to place ourselves at your disposal.

37. **Practices**—Guildenstern means *acts*, but in spite of himself he blurts out the truth—it is plotting against Hamlet. The word has that suggestion.

41. **Are joyful return'd**—have returned with joyful news (the success of negotiations). **Still**—always.

44—45. **I hold my duty...king**—he takes his duty to the king as seriously as his duty to God; it is as much as a matter of personal salvation.

46—47. **Or else this brain...sure**—Polonius believes that he is very good at dealing with complicated affairs of the state. It is fatuous delusion of his.

50. **O, speak hear**—Claudius jumps at it. So Polonius has found the clue to Hamlet's trouble.

52. **Fruit**—dessert (served at the end of a banquet).

53. **Grace**—honour. A play on the word with the sense of a short prayer before or after dinner, as suggested by 'feast'.

55. **Head and source**—main cause. **Distemper**—disease or disordered state of mind.

57. **His father's death...marriage**—The queen is after all right in her diagnosis. Her womanly instinct leads her to the truth.

58. **Sift**—probe.

61. **Upon our first**—on our entering his presence.

67. **Borne in hand**—abused. **Arrests**—summons to proceed no further in the matter (arresting of the action).

69. **In fine**—finally.

71. **Assay**—trial.

73. **In annual fee**—as any yearly allowance.

74. **Commission**—authority.

77. **Pass**—passage.

78. **This enterprise**—invasion of Poland.

79. **Regards**—considerations. **Safety**—safety to the State. **Allowance**—permis ion to Fortinbras.

80. **Likes**—pleases.

81. **Consider'd time**—leisure.

82. **Think .....business**—attend to this affair.

83. **Well-took**—undertaken with good results.

86. **Expostulate**—discuss.

89. **Were nothing**—would be nothing. Polonius means to say that abstract discussion of causes of things is a waste of time. But his prolixity is the worst thing about him.

90. **Brevity...wit**—to state a fact in a very few words is the distinction of intelligence or understanding.

91. **Tediousness**—Polonius evidently means prolixity, and he is noted for his prolixity, and is farthest from brevity. **Limbs and outward flourishes**—*i. e.*, lengthening out of a discussion with irrelevant details.

94. **What is 't...mad**—to define and analyse madness would be to descend to prolixity.

95. **Matter**—substance. **Art**—elaboration or expansion.

96—97. **'Tis...true**—so Polonius goes round and round the same thing. This is his 'art'. **Figure**—*i. e.*, figure of speech.

101. **The cause of this effect**—the effect is madness, and Polonius is going to trace its cause.

102. **This defect**—*i.e.*, the deficiency of reason. Again Polonius uses his art.

103. **Effect defective**—effect which manifests itself in deficiency reason Polonius is a bore.

105. **Perpend**—consider. Polonius purposely uses a bombastic word.

106. **Have .... mine**—she is my daughter until she is married.

109—110. **To the celestial...Ophelia**—Hamlet is making a parody of love-poems.

111—112. "**Beautified**,".. **phrase**—*Beautified* is not necessarily a vile phrase. Goggin writes, "the word seems to have been fairly common in Shakespeare's time, especially in addresses to ladies.

113. "**In her...these**—*i. e.*, the letters are to be reposed in her bosom. In Shakespeare's time, ladies had a pocket in the

bosom of their dress, and put letters and other things in this pocket.

115. **Stay awhile**—have patience. **I...faithful**—I will do my duty faithfully.

120–121. **I am ..numbers**—I am not good in writing verses. **I have..groans**—It is a hint at the love-poems, mostly sonnets of Shakespeare's Age.

124. **This machine**—humorous description of body.

126. **Solicitings**—wooings. Polonius suggests in the word the idea of reducing Ophelia.

127. **Fell out**—occurred.

128. **All...ear**—everything being communicated to me.

131. **Fain**—gladly.

132. **Hat . wing**—violent love in full course. Again there is the suggestion of immoral love.

136 **Play'd . table-book**—assisted them like a go between or had been a carrier of the letters and messages. The desk contains letters, and letters are written in a memorandum book.

137. **Or given dum**—connived at what was going on and kept silent over it.

138. **Or look'd . slight**—taken no notice of it.

139. **I went ..work**—I took action straightway.

141. **Out.. star**—above your sphere (*i. e.*, too highly placed).

142. **Proscripts**—commands.

143. **Lock...resort**—keep out of his way.

144. **Tokens**—gifts.

145. **Took .. advice**—profited by my advice.

148. **Watch**—wakefulness (*i. e.*, sleeplessness).

149. **Lightness**—light-headedness (loss of mental balance). **Declension**—process of decline.

150. **Raves**—talks wildly.

153–154. **Hath there...otherwise**—Polonius's cock-sureness is amusing. We know that Polonius is fatuously mistaken about Hamlet.

155—156. **Take.. this**—take my head from my shoulder. Dowden explains, "Take the chamberlain's staff or wood from the hand which holds it."

159. **Within the centre**—in the centre of the earth. **How...further**—the king wants further proofs.

162. **Loose my daughter**—referring to the restrictions he had placed upon Ophelia's movement 'Loose' has a bad asso-

ciation as J. D. Wilson points out, being used in reference to the breeding of horror and cattle. Polonius has a filthy mind.

163. **Arras**—tapestry.

164. **Encounter**—again a filthy suggestion of the mating of cattle and horses.

166. **Let me state**—let me cease to be a chamberlain.

167. **Keep...carters**-note the association of ideas—'loose', 'encounter', 'farm and carters.' In the background of his mind is the image of the mating of cattle or horses.

170. **Board**—accost.

172. **God-a-mercy**—'God have mercy' used in response to a respectful salutation.

174. **Fishmonger**—used of a bawd of ponder. Connect it with 'loose' above. It may also imply that Polonius is to fish out Hamlet's secret.

178—179. **To be honest...ten thousand**—honesty is very rare in the world ; out of ten thousand, one honest man can be singled out.

181—182. **For if the sun...carrion**—a dead dog decomposes out in the sun, and then worms creep about it, the sun is responsible for this decomposition. **Good kissing**—good to be kissed by the sun.

184. **Let her sun**—*i. e.*, the sun will breed by her.

185—186. **Still...daughter**—unable to dismiss the thought of my daughter from his mind.

187. **He...gone**—far gone in love or the madness of love.

188. **Much...love**—agony of love or madness of love..

19. **Matter**—subject-matter. **Between who**—Hamlet takes the obvious sense.

195. **The satirical rogue**—*i. e.*, the satirist. The whole thing is invented by Hamlet just to ridicule Polonius. But...... 'the satirical rogue' has been identified with this or that person *e. g.*, Juvenal, or Giordano Bruno, or Lyly.

196. **That old......beards**-the portrait that is drawn here stands for Polonius.

197. **Purging**—discharging. **Thick..gum**—mucous discharges as thick and sticky as resin and gum.

198. **Plentiful......wit**—not a bit of understanding.

199. **Weak hams**—sign of physical exhaustion.

202. **Like a crab...backward**—*i.e.*, if he could retrace his steps, walk backward, Polonius would be as young as Hamlet.

203—204. **Though...in 't**—Hamlet often talks sense is spite

of his wandering thoughts. Polonius has sense enough to see this. He thinks that Hamlet's madness is not entirely unregulated. There is a gleam of reason in his madness. **Will...air**—with the idea that exposure was not good for one sick.

205. **Into the grave**—Hamlet takes the literal sense of Polonius's words. If he were to walk out of the air, he should get into the grave. The grave is sealed to air.

207—203. **Pregnant**—charged with meaning. **A happiness......on**—a lucky accident for a madman to deliver himself of meaningful words. A madman may stumble upon the wisest observations, most felicitously expressed.

208—209. **Which......of**—which would be beyond the compass of sanest understanding.

212—214. **You cannot......life**—It is clear that Hamlet is happy to get rid of Polonius. Polonius always bores him. When he repeats the words—*except my life,* it does not, however, mean that he is tenaciously fond of life. Hamlet seems to be teased out of life by Polonius's talk. He simply wants to be spared the company of Polonius. Note his remark below—*These tedious old fools* !

218. **God save you**—a greeting.

222. **My excellent good friends**-Hamlet greets his friends warmly, but he soon discovers that they are the king's agents.

225. **As..... earth**—as it is explained below, they are in the mid-station of life—neither too well off nor too badly off.

227. **On Fortune's cap.....button**—we are not high up in the favour of fortune

228. **Nor......shoe**—Hamlet caps the remark by saying that they are not certainly under the feet of Fortune.

231. **That the world's.....honest**—this is contrary to Hamlet's own view which is that honesty is a rare commodity in the world. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not certainly playing an honest game, and they must say that the world has grown honest.

232. **Then .....near**-with the doomsday (Day of Judgment) drawing nearer, people might have grown honest, if at all.

233. **In particular**—in details.

235. **Prison**—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern do not know what to make of Hamlet's word—*prison.*

239. **Then .. one**—Rosencrantz argues that if Denmark is a person, then the world is prison. Hamlet can rightly say that Denmark is a person, for he is instinctively aware that his

movements and actions are watched. And he begins to suspect Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

240. **Confines**—places of confinement.

241. **Wards**—separate rooms or divisions in a prison.

243—244. **'Tis none to you**—Denmark is no prison to you. **There is...so**—N. B. This is philosophic relativism. What is good for one, may not be good for another. Good and bad are relative or subjective.

246. **Your ambition**—Rosencrantz sounds Hamlet. He wants to find out whether Hamlet's ambition failed (for his uncle has succeeded to the throne in his place) has anything to do with his ambition:

247—249. **O God...dreams**—the remark is again true to his philosophic relativism. Let him be enclosed in a nutshell, and he will find the nutshell itself infinite space. But there is the hint that he has been lately troubled by bad dreams. These 'bad dreams' set Rosencrantz and Guildenstern racking their brains. Guildenstern explains the dreams as the phantoms of ambition.

250—251. **Which dreams...dream**—Guildenstern philosophizes about ambition. There is nothing substantial about ambition ; ambition is a dream-stuff.

252. **A dream .....shadow**—Hamlet takes up the idea of dream and says that it is but a shadow of reality.

253—254. **I hold ambition...shadow**—I consider ambition so unsubstantial that I may describe it as the shadow of a shadow. Rosencrantz seems to be partly convinced that disappointed ambition is Hamlet's trouble—and would rather argue him out of ambition. Ambition is a shadow's shadow, and it is not worth pursuing.

255—256 **Then are our beggars...shadows**—ambition is the pursuit of monarchs and heroes. If ambition is a shadow, then the beggars must be bodies, and monarchs and kings who pursue the shadow of ambition, must be the beggars' shadows. **Outstretched**—puffed up, full of pretensions.

257. **Fay**—faith. **I...reason**—Hamlet openly says that he is tired of them.

258. **Wait upon you**—accompany you. Hamlet takes it to mean the waiting of a servant upon his master.

259. **No such matter**—I do not desire you to wait upon me. **Sort**—class.

262. **Dreadfully attended**—we mny refer to his 'bad dreams'

above. **In the beaten......friendship**—in terms of common friendship.

263. **What...Elsinore**—what has brought you to Elsinore, and what are you doing here ?

264. **Occasion**—cause, reason.

265. **Beggar...thanks**—he is a beggar and, therefore he has nothing to do with ambition ; he is not rich in money, and neither rich in thanks.

267. **A half-penny**—*i. e.*, at a half-penny.

268. **Deal...me**—tell me the truth, and nothing but the truth.

271. **But .....purpose**—you may say anything, but it must be to the point.

272. **There......looks**—your looks declare that you were sent for.

273. **Which your...colour**—*i. e.*, you have not yet learnt the art of dissembling. **Craft**—cunning. **Colour**—conceal.

276. **That......me**—(i) the idea of teaching him that ambition is 'a shadow's shadow' and similar profound wisdom ; (ii) making him play into the hands of the king. **Conjure**—beseech.

277. **Consonancy**—concord.

279. **A better proposer**—more expert advocate.

280. **Even and direct**—frank and straightforword.

284. **Hold nof off**—do not withhold the truth from me.

286. **Anticipation**—forestalling.

287. **Discovery**—disclosure.

287—288. **Your secrecy......feather**—your promise of secrecy to the king will remain unimpaired.

289. **Exercises**-manly sports—hunting, hawking, bowling, etc.

290. **It goes......disposition**—I am so sore-stricken.

291. **Frame**—structure. **Sterile promontory**—to Macbeth speaks of "this bank and shoal of time." *Sterile* because the earth produces no good specimens of humanity (he is thinking of Claudius, his mother, and Polonius too).

292. **Brave**—showy. **Fretted**—adorned.

293 **Golden fire**—stars.

294. **A foul...vapours**—the world is infected in Hamlet's opinion. **Pestilent**—plague-bearing **Congregation**—assemblage.

294—298. **What a piece of work......animals**—N.B. Here we have the genuine self of Hamlet recalled. And what a change has taken place in him ! He has lost faith in the goodness of

humanity. He has been driven to cynicism by the depravity of human specimens he has witnessed in Denmark. As he is too apt for generalization, his view of humanity as a whole is coloured by his disillusionment and sad experience of men and women in Denmark, added to the task of revenging the foul murder of his father, so beloved and worshipped by him as the man that was—a true prototype. **How...faculties**—*i. e.*, there being no limit to the development of human faculties. **Express**—exact. **Apprehension**—understanding. **Paragon**—model of excellence.

299. **Quintessence of dust**—after all man, despite all his fine qualities, will be dust ('dust thou art, and to dust return'st.')

**Quintessence**—pure essence or essential part.

301—302. **Though...so**—perhaps they have been told that Hamlet's madness is due to love.

303. **Stuff**—idea.

307. **Lenten**—poor.

308. **Coted**—passed by.

311. **His majesty...me**—one who plays the king shall have all due respect from me. **Adventurous knight**—all typical dramatic characters are mentioned here.

312. **Foil**—blunt-edged sword with a button on the point. **Target**—shield. **The lover...gratis**—sighs and groans are characteristic of a lover. He will not sigh to no purpose or in vain; that means he will either have the sympathy of the audience or be united with his sweetheart.

313. **Humorous man**—"Not the funny man or jester...but the actor who personated the fantastic characters for the most part represented as capricious and quarrelsome" (*Staunton*).

"Such characters as Falconbridge, Jaques, and Mercutio." (*Delius*).

**End...peace**—not take to quarrelling.

314. **Tickle o' the sere**—easily excited to laughter. **Sere**—part of a gun-lock which keeps the hammer at full or half cock; so **tickle o' the sere**—ready to go off at any time, yielding easily to any impulse.

315—316. **The lady shall say...for 't**—the lady may omit something smutty, and it will be revealed in the lameness of the metre.

318. **Tragedians of the city**—not Shakespeare's Company, but the Lord Admiral's men.

319. **They travel**—they are on a provincial tour. A refer-

ence to the circumstances of Shakespeare's time. **Their residence**—their being well-placed in the city.

321. **Inhibition**—official prohibition of the performance of stage-plays.

322. **Late innovation**—the recent growing popularity of boy-actors. *Innovation* has also been explained as some political upheavel, and is supposed to refer to the rising of the Earl of Essex. E. K. Chambers points out that the Globe Company was in disgrace, for it gave a performance of *Richard II* on the eve of the rising of Essex, and organized by Essex's followers. The Globe Company too **travelled**—were at Aberdeen, and then at Cambridge—they were not permitted to act at court.

325. **No.. not**—they have lost their popularity.

326. **Do...rusty**—have they ceased to appeal to the taste of the audience ?

327. **Their...pace**—they maintain their old standard of acting.

328. **Eyrie**—nest of a bird of prey, especially an eagle. **Eyases**—unfledged hawks. **An eyrie of children**—reference to the boy-actors of the Blackfriers. The children of the chapel produced Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* in 1600 and *Poetaster* in 1601. These plays were full of attacks on rival poets and players. This rivalry of dramatists and players is known as the 'war of theatres'. **Cry...question**—(i) declaim their parts in shrill voices beyond the scope of the theme ; (ii) "whose shrill voices are heard above all others in controversy."

329. **Tyrannically**—violently. **Clapped**—applauded.

331—333. **Berattle**—fill with din ; then decry. **Common stages**–public theatres. **Many .. rapiers**-gallants. **Goose quills**—writers; the dramatists who applaud the boy-actors (the children of the chapel) and revile their rivals. **Dore .. thither**–so the public theatres are being neglected. The dramatists writing for the children's theatre poured ridicule on public theatres, and public theatres had become unfashionable, and so the fashionable, gallants did not patronize public theatres.

334. **Maintains 'em**—patronizes them.

335. **Escoted**—maintained, paid. **Quality**—profession of actors.

336. **No longer...sing**—when they have lost the sweetness of their voice.

338. **If their means...better**—if they have not made their fortune by the time they cease to be actors.

339. **Exclaim...succession**—cry out against the 'common players', whose place they are to fill later.

341. **There has ..sides**—either side is to blame.

342. **Tarre**—incite (used in reference to dogs).

343—344. **There was...question**—*i. e.*, no money was paid for a play by the manager unless it had something to do with this controversy. **Argument**—subject-matter ; here, plot of a play. **Went to cuffs**—fought. **Question**—the issue.

345. **Throwing ..brains**—*i. e.*, dispute of 'The poet and the player.

347. **Carry it away**—win the day.

348. **Hercules...too**—Hercules bearing the world like Atlas, which is the sign of the Globe Theatre on the Bankside. Against the Globe Theatre, the Blackfriars Theatre has scored a resounding success.

350. **Mows**—grimaces.

352. **Picture in little**—miniature. **'Sblood**—God's blood—an oath in reference to the bleeding Christ on the Cross.

353. **There is something ..out**—Hamlet considers it an abnormal state of things, the cause of which it is the task of philosophy to find out, if possible. Compare his words, addressed to Horatio, concerning the ghost :

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

356. **Appurtenance**—accompaniment. **Fashion and ceremony**—ceremonial mode or form.

357. **Comply......garb**—use ceremony according to the fashion or practice.

358. **Extent**—show of courtesy.

359. **Entertainment**—right welcome. **Uncle-father and aunt-mother**—if Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had been very intelligent, they could have guessed that Hamlet had something to be dissatisfied with about the conduct of Claudius and his mother

363. **I am but ..north-north west**—Hamlet means that he is—now and then mad, it all depending on the direction of the wind.

364. **I know...handsaw**—*handsaw* is supposed to be a corruption of heronshaw and so it is a heron ; now when a north wind drives a heron and a hawk towards the south, they are difficult to be distinguished one from the other caught in the glare of sunlight. They can be easily distinguished when the wind is southerly, that is, when a hawk pursues a heron, one

can be easily distinguished from other when they are flying north. While the idea is that Hamlet's sanity is affected by the direction of the wind (a southerly wind being recognized as good for the melancholic). Hamlet may have in mind too Rosencrantz and Guildenstern out to hunt him like birds of prey. Dowden writes, "The south wind is generally represented by Shakespeare as a wind of evil contagion. Does Hamlet mean that he can recognise the king's birds of chase flying on an ill wind ?"

365. **Well...you**—it is a greeting.

367. **That great baby.. swaddling-clouts**—Hamlet means Polonius who does not seem to have outlived his infancy, as Hamlet thinks. His puerile talk makes Hamlet think so. **Swaddling clouts**—swathing clothes in which a baby is wrapped at birth.

369. **Happily**—haply ; perhaps. **He 's......**them it is his second childhood.

372. **You say right...indeed**—Hamlet pretends to talk of something to his companions in order to mislead Polonius.

375. **Roscius**—a celebrated Roman actor.

378. **Buz, buz**—a cry of impatience to stop any one from telling something that is already known and stale.

379. **Then come...ass**–Hamlet connects Polonius's oath—'upon my honour' and his statement that the players are come. So each player comes, mounted on an ass. The line is quoted from some ballad.

384. **Scene individable**—a play in which the unity of place is maintained. **Poem unlimited**—one disregarding the unities of time and place. **Seneca**—a Roman tragedian (C. 4 B. C.–65 A. D.), who left a number of works on philosophy, and had some eight tragedies ascribed to him. His tragedies were all translated, and exercised great influence in the early stage of English tragedy. "Blood and thunder" tragedies owe much to Seneca ; the use of the supernatural, rant and bombast, sententious moralizing all came from Seneca. **Plautus**—the most celebrated Roman comedian (C. 250-184 B. C.)

385. **The law of writ and the liberty**—both plays observing the three unities of time, and action and plays which set these unities at naught. Seneca observed the rules of construction : Plautus was rather careless about construction.

**These...men**—these are the best players.

387. **O Jephthah...Israel**—Hamlet refers to an old ballad, to be found in Percy's *Reliques*. Jephthah sacrificed, as he

vowed his daughter whom he first saw on coming from his victory over the Ammonites. **Treasure**—Jephthah's daughter.

392. **Passing**—surpassingly.

397. **That following not**—I do not mean to say that.

399. **Wot**—knows. Here is the line that follows the verse Hamlet has quoted.

401. **As most like**—as most likely.

401 **Chanson**—verse. **Abridgment**—the cause of cutting short my remark.

407. **Valanced**—bearded. **Beard me**—a quibble, the idea of flaunting his beard at him.

408. **My young lady**—a boy who plays the part of a lady. There were no actresses in Shakespeare's time.

409. **Nearer to heaven**—*i. e.*, grown in height.

410. **Chopine**—kind of shoe raised by means of a cork sole or the like, worn in Spain and Italy, especially at Venice.

411. **Uncurrent gold**—a gold coin defective and not good for currency.

41/. **Cracked within the ring**—a ring with the sovereign's head inside was on the coin; if the crack extended from the edge beyond the ring, the coin was rejected. Such coins "were hoarded by the usurers of the time and lent out as lawful money". Hamlet refers to the breaking of a boy's voice as he grows up, for in that case he will not be able to play a female role. **We 'll e'en to 't**—let us have a speech straightway.

413. **Like French falconers**—the French falconers let off their hawks at any kind of bird.

414. **Quality**—*i. e.*, professional skill. **Quality**—meant the profession of actors.

419 **Caviare to the general**—caviare is roe of sturgeon pressed and salted and eaten as a relish. generally unpalatable to those who have not acquired the taste for it So Hamlet means that it was a speech that the common people could not appreciate.

421. **Cried...mine**—was superior to my opinion.

422. **Digested**—disposed; neatly distributed.

423. **Modesty**—sense of proportion. **Cunning**—skill.

424. **Sallets**—salads; so prurient witticisms. **Savoury**—tasty.

425. **No matter...phrase**—nothing in expression. **Indict**—convict

426. **Affection**—affection.
427. **Eine**—tricked in meretricious phrases.
428. **Aeneas' tale to Dido**—N. B. The speech might have been suggested by *Dido, Queeen of Carthage*, left unfinished by Marlowe and completed by Nash. It looks like a parody of their style. But why should then Hamlet admire it? Perhaps Shakespeare's intention is to mark the difference in style between his and their routing. Goggin writes, 'Perhaps in reverting to the style of his early contemporaries Shakespeare intended not only to earmark the speech by making it differ from the rest of the play, but also to show the superiority of his own style and the advance he had made in the dramatic art."
432. **The rugged Pyrrhus**–the incident is taken from Vergil's *Aeneid*, ii, 526–558. **Hyrcanian beast**—*i. e.*, tiger from Hyrcania on the south and south-east coast of the Caspian Sea, which was supposed to be infested with tigers in ancient times.
434. **Sable**—black
436. **Couched**—crouching, and ready to spring **Ominous horse**—the wooden horse in which the Greek warriors lay concealed, and from which they came out in the darkness of night and ravaged the city of Troy.
437. **Dread**—dreaded.
438. **Hearldry**—heraldic device. Explained below.
439. **Gules**—heraldic term for red. **Trick'd...trick**—is a heraldic term—to delineate arms, indicating colours by means of certain arrangements of dots or lines, here spotted or smeared.
441. **Impasted**—made into a paste. **Parching**—drying in the heat of the flame (for Troy was set on fire).
442. **A tyrannous...light**—a lurid glare.
443. **Roasted in**—consumed by.
444. **O'ersized**—covered over with something like size (a kind of weak glue). **Coagulate**—collected. **Gore**—blood.
445. **Carbuncles**—red or fiery precious stones.
448. **Discretion**—sense of proportion.
451. **Striking Greeks**—Priam is weak, and, therefore, he fails to reach the Greeks with his blows. **Antique**–old-fashioned.
452. **Rebellious to his arm**—unsteady, and slipping out of hand.
4 3. **Repugnant**—averse. **Unequal match'd**—possessing superior strength to his opponent.
454. **Drives**–rushes. **Strikes wide**–strikes with all his force.

455. **Whip**—the quick movement. **Wind**—swish. **Fell**—cruel.

456. **Senseless Ilium**—*i. e.*, Troy, though without any capacity of feeling.

457. **With flaming top**—Troy had been set on fire.

458. **Stoops ..base**—topples down. **Hideous crash**—deafening noise of the clashing Troy.

459. **Takes...ear**—stuns Pyrrhus.

460. **Declining**—ready to fall. **Milky head**—refers to the grey hair of Priam.

462. **Painted tyrant**—the picture of a tyrant with the sword in his hand uplifted and suspended in the air.

463. **Neutral...matter**—a person suspended in his movement and unable to execute his and fulfil the demand of the movement

465. **Against some storm**—on the eve of a storm.

466. **Rack**—mass of clouds.

467. **The orb below**—the earth.

468. **Hush**—silent.

469. **Region**—air.

471. **Cyclops**—one-eyed giants. They worked at Vulcan's smithy.

472. **Mars's armour**—Mars was the god of war. As the assistant of Vulcan, the Cyclops made the metal armour and ornaments for gods and horses. **Proof eterne**—durable for ever.

473. **Remorse**—pity.

474. **Out, Fortune**—*out* expresses abhorrence, reproach, or indignation.

475. **Synod**—assembly

476. **Breaks...wheel**—Fortune is represented with a wheel, which she trips turning. This signifies the fickleness of fortune. *Fellies* and reins of a wheel.

477. **Nave**—the black in the centre of a wheel, in which the spokes and axils are fixed ; hub.

478. **Fiends**—the devils in hell.

481. **It...beard**—it needs to be cut short like your beard.

482. **Jig**—lively, comic, or farcical performance given at the end or in an interval of a play.

484. **Mobled**—muffled.

488. **Bisson rheum**—blinding tears. **Clout**—rag.

490. **O'er-teemed**—exhausted by excessive child-bearing. Hecuba was the mother of fifty sons and fifty daughters.

492. **With...steep'd**—*i. e.*, in bitter and violent words. **Venom**—poison.

493. **'Gainst...pronounced**—indicted the dipensation or the faithless act of Fortune.

495. **Malicious sports**—spiteful enjoyment.

498. **Things mortal**—human affairs.

499. **Milch**—moist (with tears). **The burning eyes of heaven** - the sun and stars.

500. **Passion**—grief.

505. **Bestowed**—lodged.

506. **Abstract...time**-summary account and records of the time. The idea is that the drama mirrors the age and the people.

508. **You were better...live**—the actors may draw a bad portrait of you, or caricature you while you are living; a bad inscription after death is better than that.

509. **Desert**—merit.

511. **Bodykins** - diminutive of body. "The reference was originally to the sacramental bread." **Scape whipping**—escape castigation. Whipping was the punishment of rogues and vagabonds.

512. **After...dignity**—in terms of your honour and position.

521. **Study**—used of a player muggling up his part.

524. **Mock him not**—do not take any liberties with him. They have noticed how Hamlet has been ridiculing Polonius. **Leave**—take leave of.

528. **God ye**—good-bye to you.

530. **What...I**—Hamlet's self-reproach at his own inactivity. He has noticed how the actor has been profoundly moved by the recital of Hecuba's story. It is a fiction that agitates him so much while Hamlet, as he thinks, remains passive with the murder of his father remaining unavenged and the honour of the queen to be vindicated.

531. **Monstrous** - strange beyond limits.

532. **Fiction**—fictitious story. **Dream of passion**—a sort of worked-up excitement or grief.

533. **Force...conceit**—bring his soul under the control of his imagination; compel his soul to portray the passion. **Conceit**—imagination.

534. **From...working**—as his soul struggled to express the passion. **Visage**—face. **Wann'd**—turned pale.

535. **Distraction in 's aspect**—distracted look.
536. **Function** – activity ; action of his faculties.
537. **Forms**—expression and gesture.
541. **Motive...passion**—excitement of reason and feeling.
543. **Cleave...speech**—split the ears of the audience with a violent speech.
544. **Make...free**—N.B. Now perhaps Hamlet has a subconscious feeling that Claudius might be driven to betray his guilt by the speech, inserted by himself in the play, going to be performed before the king.
548. **Muddy-mettle**—of sluggish, apathetic spirit ; so feelingless as mud. **Peak** —mope about.
549. **John-a dreams**—John the dreamer. **Unpregnant of my cause**—not stirred into action by the task I have to fulfil.
551. **Property**—crown and wife.
552. **Defeat**—destruction.
553—554. **Who calls...face** - the idea is that Hamlet submits to all kinds of indignities by taking no action against his father's murder and the dishonour of his mother.
555. **'Tweaks**—twists or jerks. **Gives......throat**—*i. e.*, charges me with a damned lie.
556. **Who does me this**—of course, he means Claudius.
557. **'Swounds**—God's wounds. **Take it**—submit to all these indignities.
558. **Pigeon-liver'd**—meek ; gentle. The liver of a pigeon is without gall ; it is meek and gentle.
**Gall**—the bile, secreted by the liver ; then rancour ; bitterness of feeling.
559. **Or ere**—before this.
561. **Region kites**—kites of the air.
562. **Offal**—carcase.
563. **Remorseless**—pitiless. **Treacherous**—because he murdered his brother and came to the throne. **Lecherous**—lustful (guilty of adultery with the queen). **Kindless**—unnatural.
567. **Prompted......hell**—first the revenge of his father's murder is a secret duty—a duty imposed by Heaven, according to the notions of Hamlet's time : secondly, he is prompted to revenge by a spirit, and the spirit, as he is not still free from suspicion, might be a spirit from hell.
568. **Shrew**—scolding, woman. **Unpack......words**—unburden my heart.
569. **Drab**—prostitute.

570. **Scullion**–kitchen-maid. Hamlet means that he has been behaving like a scold when only words flow from his tongue, or like a bad woman who can only curse or like a kitchen-maid.

571. **About my brain**—let my brain be active.

573. **Cunning**—skill.

575. **Malefactions**—crimes.

576—577. **Though...tongue**—though it is mute. **Will..... organ**—will reveal itself through an unsuspected and therefore, wonderful medium.

580. **Tent**—probe, literally, to keep open (a wound) with a small roll of cotton. **Quick**—vital part. **I 'll tent...quick**—examine into the depth of his soul. **Blench**—turn pale.

581. **I...... cause**—I know the line of action I am to follow.

584. **As he ..spirits**—as a bad spirit can easily influence the mind of a weak and melancholy person.

585. **Abuses**—deceives. **Damn me**—risk my soul.

586. **Mere relative**—bearing more closely upon the motive of my action.

587—588. **The play 's the thing**—the play is the device that will lay bare inmost soul of the king.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) Apathy seems to have followed Hamlet's shock and strain. But he is not incautious at all ; is on his defensive in his dealings with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. So does he bamboozle Polonius. His scrutinizing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is an acid test of his sanity. When he talks of Denmark being a prison, including his discourse on man as a quintessence of dust, he, in his enigmatic way, delivers himself of the truth that plagues his mind, but Rosencrantz and Guildenstern can make nothing of it.

(2) There seems to be a desired diversion in his talk with the players. He gets really interested in the story of Hecuba, as recited by the player. He notices the effect, conjured by the player ; his feelings too are reacting. And the soliloquy at the end of the scene marks the decisive moment in the state of partial wavering and scrupulous regard for the fairness of any action that he might take.

"This passage with the players crowns and completes the main dramatic purpose of the scene. An idle prince, indeed, who not only walks reading and musing by the hour together in the lobby, but will sit fastidiously exchanging with a player the recital of Aeneas' tale to Dido ! And a weakling, who can seek refuge

from his own 'cue for passion' in facile play for Hecuba! We shall learn in a moment that, even as he sat there listening, this stultifying self-picture was forming in his own mind. But Shakespeare has first painted it thus elaborately for us, and stressed the feb ile talk with his friends, the mocking of Polonius, the keen interest in the petty politics of the theatre, the call for 'a passionate speech', the contented surrender to its music, so that we may first begin to wonder when, if ever, the revulsion will come. Then, when it comes, we welcome it the more. —*H. Granville-Barker.*

(3) The soliloquy helps us to understand Hamlet's apparent delay and hesitation much better. The self-disgust, expressed so poignantly, can only arise in a personality mercilessly honest. It will admit of no self-deception concerning neglect of duty, due to any weakness of its own. It is one depending for moral support on self-respect. It is indeed a great thing that Hamlet can look at himself objectively, when we imagine that he is self-centred.

## ACT III

### Scene I

**Argument:** Rosencrantz and Guildenstern present their report to the king. Rosencrantz has no doubt, observed at least Hamlet's studied politeness and skilful evasions, but in his report he does not let the king know that Hamlet has succeeded in extracting from them, their secret (namely, that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been sent for by the king to spy on Hamlet). The king cannot make much of what they tell him. Therefore, he readily falls in with the plan that he and Polonius should conceal themselves and overhear a conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia. The queen withdraws after addressing some friendly words to Ophelia with a hope that there will be a happy end to all their differences by her marriage with the prince.

Ophelia, instructed in the part she is to play, is offered a prayer book to colour her presence there. Polonius seems to be a bit uneasy at the duplicity into which he initiates his daughter. The king's conscience too is touched, and he gives expression to his sense of guilt, so long suppressed. It serves to remove the uncertainty the audience might have felt after Hamlet's recently expressed scepticism as to the genuineness of the ghost.

Hamlet now enters, musing with himself on the alternative of life or death. Is it worthwhile to endure an existence full of

injustice or to make an end of everything by opposing overwhelming forces ? There is the more important point to consider ; it is whether death is mere sleep that ends all our troubles or whether there may be something still worse waiting for us after our death. It is from such a consideration that men submit to the worst of sufferings on earth rather than seek the dreaded unknown. (The soliloquy seems to be out of place here. It belongs to an earlier part of the play). It is interesting to note now he sums up finally : 'Conscience, that is, reflection, prevents action, the king is the enemy of doing.

He perceives Ophelia before the soliloquy ends, and she seems to be deep in her prayer book. Ophelia begs him to take back the presents he has previously given her since his change of attitude, as she says, makes them of little value now. Hamlet who seems to have lost all interest in her, denies that he has givenher any presents. He addresses her as though she were a stranger. A distrust of female virtue (understandable from the conduct of his mother) marks all his words. He accuses himself also of hereditary criminal tendencies. It finally leads to a misanthropic reflection on the worthlessness of all mankind ; hence his advice to Ophelia to get to a nunnery. Casually, he inquires about her father (but we have no reason to believe that Hamlet is aware of Polonius's eavesdropping behind the arras). The hint of utter baseness and depravity of women in his speech has more to do with his mother than with Ophelia.

When Hamlet is gone, Ophelia voices her inconsolable grief at the havoc she witnesses in Hamlet. She herself being a victim of it as well. In her description of the young Hamlet we see what he was before the cloud of melancholy settled upon him—the embodiment of what to that age, was the ideal of human perfection ; courtier, soldier, scholar in one.

The king and Polonius now come out. They little bother about Ophelia's grief, or at the way they have used her as a tool. The king is no longer to be put off by Polonius's plea of Hamlet's madness. He believes that Hamlet has a dangerous complex. He makes up his mind to send him to England as a happy riddance. At this stage, Polonius persuades him to fix up an interview between mother and son, after the play, which will be the way to sound Hamlet.

## NOTES

1. **Drift of circumstance**—indirect means.

2. **Puts......confusion**—plays the madman.

3-4. **Grating ..lunacy**—marring the quiet and normal order of existence with violence and latent peril to others.

5. **Distracted**-harried and tormented by some secret trouble.

7. **Forward...sounded**—lending himself to be probed or examined.

8. **Crafty madness**—madness which is mingled with shrewdness. **Keeps aloof**—*i.e.*, maintains reserve and reticence (will not mix freely with us).

10. **His true state**—the secret trouble of his mind.

12. **With disposition**-*i.e.*, with some constraint of manner.

13. **Niggard of question**—(1) reserved in speech; (2) sparing of questions. **Demands**—questions that we asked.

13—14. **Niggard...reply**—N. B. Rosencrantz conceals one thing. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were sent by the king to pump out Hamlet's secret. But Hamlet pumped out their secret, namely, that they had been sent for by the king to spy on him. **Assay him**—try to get him interested.

17. **O'er-wrought**—overtaken.

26-27. **Give...delights**—stimulate his desire for pleasure or pastime, and fulfil it.

29. **Closely**—secretly.

31. **Affront**—meet.

32. **Lawful espials**—*i.e.*, persons having a legitimate right to spy on him.

33. **Bestow**—hide.

35. **As...behaved**—as he conducts himself.

39—40. **That your...wildness**—that your virtue and beauty may have caused madness of love in him, and lead to a happy result.

41. **Wonted way**—normal way of life.

42. **To both your honours**—to the credit of you both.

43. **Gracious**—Polonius addresses the king.

44. **This book**—a prayer book is handed to Ophelia.

45. **Exercise**—act of devotion. **Colour**—excuse ; give a pretext for.

47. **Devotion 's visage**—air or pretence of devotion.

48. **Sugar o'er**—gloss over or give a pleasant, innocent look to.

49. **The devil himself**—*i. e.*, a wicked act.

50. **How smart a lash**—N. B. It is the first time that Claudius gives a hint of the crime preying upon his mind. "With

devotion's visage and pious action." he has, indeed sugared over the devil himself. His conscience has not been atrophied yet. We recall here the ghost's words "with witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts," with which he reduced Gertrude, and with which he duped the courtiers and people.

51. **Beautied ...art**—Hamlet later says, "I have heard of your paintings too, well enough ; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another." Again, in the graveyard scene, Hamlet addresses the skull of Yorick : "Now get you to my lady chamber, and tell her, let her *point an inch tnick*, to this favour she must come." *Plastering art* was the beauty make up in those days. Nashe writes, "if not to tempt and be thought worthy to be tempted, why *dye they and diet their faces with so many drugs* as they do, as it were to correct God's workmanship, and reprove Him as a bungler, and one that is not his craftsmaster ?

53. **Painted** —plausible ; specious. **Than...word**—so by unctuous words he covers up his sin.

54. **Heavy burden**–the sin that weighs upon his conscience.

56. **To be...... ber**—either to go on living, or to put an end to life by suicide. N. B. "Hamlet, who proceeds to comment on what he reads, is deep in *Plato* ; proof of which is afforded by Montaigue, who, acting as Shakespeare's intermediary quotes from Plato's *Apology*, in which Socrates philosophizes on the nature of death. These speculations agree strikingly, both in context and phraseology, with Hamlet's strain of thought, which is, in fact, an examination of Plato's ideas, though Hamlet, after welcoming the idea of death almost in pagan fashion, proceeds to find objections that arise from the Christian doctrine of immortality." —*Schucking.*

57–60. **Whether 'tis nobler ............them**—the question as it appears to Hamlet is this. Should one submit to all the ills and calamities of life, or resist life itself which is the source of all troubles, and end all troubles by suicide. **Take arms against a sea** – this has been blamed by some as a mixed metaphor, but Shakespeare refers to an actual custom of the Celts, Gauls, and Cimbri, as stated by various classical writers ; they used to take up arms and rush into the sea to combat with it.

61. **No more**—if death no more than an endless sleep

in which all troubles of life are forgotten, then death should be welcome.

62. **Heart-ache**—the painful thoughts and distractions by which the human mind is agitated, as Hamlet's mind is. **The thousand natural shocks**—such as the shock of his mother's depravity and Claudius's foul crime.

63. **That ..to**—which are incidental to earthly existence. **Consummation**—a desired end.

64. **Devoutly to be wished**—earnestly to be longed for.

65. **Perchance to dream**—death is sleep, but it is a sleep that may be followed by bad dreams. What may come after death, particularly after suicide, raises doubt in Hamlet's mind about the wisdom of suicide to get rid of the troubles of life. **Rub**—an obstacle by which a bowl is hindered in or diverted from its proper course ; so hindrance.

67. **Mortal coil**—the turmoil and anxieties of earthly existence. There is also the idea of a coil of rope—the body coiled round the soul. The body is the "muddy vesture of decay." (*Merchant of Venice*).

68. **Pause**—pause to think before we commit suicide. **Respect**—consideration.

69. **That life**—that reduces life to such a long calamity.

70. **The whips......time**—the outrages which the world puts, upon us.

71. **Oppressors wrong**—the acts of oppression. **Contumely**—the humiliation resulting from insolent, insulting language or abuse.

72. **Despised**—rejected. **The law's delay**—the law's delay is proverbial.

73—74. **The insolence of office**—the rude behaviour of one holding office, say, the rudeness and insolence of a bureaucrat —a common complaint nowadays. **The spurns...takes**—the indignities which a patient man of merit is subjected to by an unworthy person.

75. **Quietus**—discharge or acquittance from life.

76. **Bodkin**—dagger. **Fardels**—burdens.

77. **To grunt...life**—in *grunt* there may be the idea of uttering a protest or uttering a guttrual sound under heavy labour ; there is also the idea of sweating under labour.

79. **Dread ..death**—N. B. A pagan sentiment. The pagan did not believe in life after death, and clung to this earthly life with all passionate longing. But as Hamlet is thinking particu-

larly of suicide he might have in mind the terrors of hell! There is a mix-up of pagan sentiment and Christian thought here.

79. **Bourn**—boundary.

80. **Puzzles the will**—confounds the resolve to die.

83. **Conscience**–consciousness, reasoning, reflection. **Does ...all**—*i.e.*, makes us afraid of death. Because we can think, we dread death. Death would be no terror to us if we could not think or reason.

84. **The native... resolution**—the original character of the resolve we make.

85. **Is ..thought**—*i e.*, is modified or altered by thought and reasoning. So thought sickens and undermines resolution. **Sickliedo'er**—covered over with a sickly colour. **Cast of thought**—*cast* is the shade of colour, tinge.

86. **Pitch**—technically, the height to which a hawk soars. **Moment**—importance.

87. **With this regard ...awry**–are diverted from their right course under the influence of thought and reason.

88 **Lose...action**–remain unexecuted. **Soft..... now**—now he beholds Ophelia.

89. **The fair Ophelia**—N. B. He addresses Ophelia at first gently. We have no reason to imagine that Hamlet suspects the presence of Polonius behind the arras or that Ophelia is playing a game. But Ophelia's tone seems to grate on his ears; and her offering to return his gifts rouses his suspicion. She must have been tutored to do so. She has lately shunned Hamlet. Now to ask—"How does your honour for this many a day?" The mere show which cannot escape. Hamlet's eyes, and the insincerity which neither his ears can miss, at once alter his behaviour towards her. **Orisons**—prayers.

90. **Be...remember'd**—N.B. Hamlet is not afflicted by sin unless it be dereliction of duty to his murdered father—which does always plague her mind. In his mental tension and distraction and in his lonely suffering he turns to the aid of Ophelia's prayer. We need not doubt the sincerity of his wish. He cannot share his thought and counsel with anybody—and though his heart hungers for sympathy, he must go without it.

92. **Well, well, well**—*Well* is thrice repeated; and it shows his impatience. He is ill in spirit, and he might cry in his anguish.

93. **Remembrances**—love-tokens.

96. **I never.. aught**—Hamlet denies having made any pre-

to Ophelia. But there is a deeper meaning in these words. Ophelia has changed as he perceives now. So he cannot be the same Hamlet that loved Ophelia. "Hamlet means that he was a different man and Ophelia a different woman when he gave the presents. Ophelia, however, who has no insight, takes the words literally."

98—99. **Words...rich**—words of tender love that made the gifts doubly acceptable. **The perfume lost**—*i.e.*, those words having had now lost all their meaning.

101. **Rich...poor**—gifts lose their value.

103. **Honest**—virtuous.

104. **My lord**—Ophelia is surprised to hear such a question, addressed to her.

105—107. **That if you...beauty**—that if you are fair and virtuous, your virtue should guard your beauty, letting nobody pay addresses to your beauty. Ophelia takes *discourse* in the sense of holding intercourse or being in communication with.

109. **Commerce**—conversation ; intercourse. **Cloud beauty...honesty**–*i.e.*, beauty and virtue should keep together.

111—113. **For the power...likeness**—beauty can corrupt virtue more easily than virtue can influence beauty.

114. **Paradox**–a statement that is self-contradictory. **Gives it proof**—tests it and finds it true. He is thinking of his mother's breach of faith.

117—118. **For virtue...it**—we may implant virtue in our nature, but it cannot discard the original sin The metaphor of grafting one fruit tree upon another. **Old stock**—the idea of a rotten tree-stock.

119. **I loved you not**—does he deny that he ever loved Ophelia ? Does he mean that it was love infected ?

121 **Get...nunnery**–she should get to a nunnery to escape the contagion of the world.

122. **Breeder of sinners**—mother of sinner. **Indifferent**—fairly.

123—124. **Yet I could...me**—I am conscious of such vices in myself that I wish that my mother had not borne me. **I am very proud etc**–Hamlet purposely disparages himself to kill Ophelia's love for him, if she has any. Or, in his bitterness of spirit he accuses himself of vices that are non-existent. He is far from proud, he would not talk so familiarly to an actor ; he is far from revengeful or he would have readily executed his revenge without scrupulous consideration ; he is far from ambitions for

he could be contented in a nut shell and count himself "king of infinite space." **At my beck**—perhaps in an embryonic stage, but within command.

126–127. **I have...then in**—he means that these vices have not yet been brought within the scope of thought, imagination or action.

128. **Crawling......heaven**—note the cynical contempt expressed here.

130. **Where's your father**—does he casually ask this ? Or has he a suspicion that Ophelia has been tutored by her father ?

131. **At home...my lord**—she consciously tells a lie.

She knows that her father and the king are behind the arras. She is a willing party to the trick that is played. That Hamlet senses Polonius and the king behind the arras does not seem likely, though "an old and effective theatrical custom has it." Schucking rightly says that such a discovery would probaby have produced a far greater effect upon Hamlet. He adds, "Moreover, on the occasion of Polonius' second eavesdropping, which costs him his life, Hamlet would probably have made some reference to the first ; and in any case he would most certainly not have uttered a threat, however veiled, against the king, if he had really suspected that someone was in hiding. Finally, it would have been more in accordance with Shakespeare's technique to hint at something of the kind, and this would easily have been possible if the king had been given a few lines after Hamlet's exit. Thus, Hamlet's sudden inquiry has a somewhat accidental air, made for the purpose of satisfying the audience that Polonius is learning at first hand the truth of the old adage that listeners seldom hear good of themselves."

132–133. **Let......house**—Hamlet cannot stand Polonius's dotage, and wishes that he should keep it to himself. He makes himself ridiculous when he talks ; better he should keep home.

134. **O, help him .. heavens**—it is an involuntary cry from Ophelia for she perceives that Hamlet is too far gone madness.

135. **Plague**—curse.

136–137. **Be thou......calumny**—*i. e.*, a woman may be chaste and modest, but she will get slandered. **Nunnery**—it is the safe place for her where she will not be a breeder of sinners and where she can escape slander. Some critics see in *nunnery* a convert allusion to a house of ill-fame.

139. **Monsters**—cuckolds. Husbands, cuckolded or deceived by their wives, were said to wear horns on their brow ; so horned creatures are monsters.

142. **Your paintings**—painting of your faces.

143–144. **God ..another**–women are not satisfied with the God-given face and complexion which they try to beautify by artificial means. **You . amble**—women mince or walk with affected gait. **Lisp**—talk in affected accents.

145. **Nickname**—give wanton names to. **Make......ignorance**—plead your ignorance for your immoral behaviour.

146. **Go to**—a cry of impatience or disgust. **I 'll...on 't**—I can stand it no more.

147. **No more marriages**—for marrriage means breeding of sinners.

148. **Those live**—Hamlet has Claudius in mind, and Claudius lately married incestuously, will not be spared to live. Claudius from behind the arrars hears it, and might know what it could mean to him.

150. **O'erthrown**—wrecked in madness.

151. **The courtier's...sword**—the courtier's tongue (gift of fair speech), the soldier's sword (gift of courage), the scholar's eye (gift of insight or perception). "The Elizabethan ideal of the *complete* man—that is the man of breeding action, and culture ; a Philip Sidney or Raleigh." —*Verity*.

152. **The expectancy state**—one who would have fulfilled the hope of the state and graced the court (*rose*).

153. **The glass......form**—the model to others in their action and behaviour.

154. **The observed _observers**—the object of attraction to others. **Down**—broken.

155. **Deject**—dejected.

156. **Suck'd...vows**—drank in his sweet words of love.

157. **Sovereign**—supreme.

158. **Jangled**—discordant.

159. **Blown**—in full bloom.

160. **Blasted with ecstasy**—ruined by madness.

162. **His affections...tend**—he does not seem to be affected by love.

163. **It ..little**—it was a little inconsistent or irrelevant.

164—165. **There 's .....brood**–there is some deep-seated trouble in his mind, and it is nursed by his melancholy.

166—167. **Hatch**—suggested by *brood* above—the metaphor of a bird sittting on eggs. **I do...danger**—some secret trouble in his mind which his melancholy is nursing, may at any moment break out into a violent form. **Prevent**—forestall.

196. **Set it down**—resolved. **Shall...England**–verb of motion is omitted.

170. **Neglected tribute**—tribute not yet paid.

172. **Variable objects**—shifting scenes.

173. **Something settled matter**—the somewhat deep-rooted trouble in his mind.

174—175. **His brains . beating**—his mind being always exercised. **Puts himself**—distracts him and drives him to abnormal behaviour.

176—178. **Yet do...love**—Polonius still retains his delusion that Hamlet is mad from disappointed love.

113. **Grief**—grievance. **Round**—frank and outspoken.

184—185. **I 'll..... conference**–Polonius will be eavesdropping again. **If she...not**—if she cannot discover the secret of his trouble.

189. **Madness.. go**—madness in a person of influence in the state cannot be connived at.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) The king's self-confession of guilt, confirming the ghost's revelation to Hamlet unknowing it, Hamlet seeks the confirmation of the king's guilt in the play, going to be performed. The climax is near.

(2) Ophelia leading herself to be used as a tool by her father and the king. Hamlet seems to see through the game.

(3) Hamlet's soliloquy has no immediate bearing upon the issue, and seems to be out of place here (See *Introduction*). It, however, suits well Hamlet's melancholic turn of mind and habit of generalization. He always reaches beyond his ownself —and in his soliloquy it is his concern about humanity, which for the moment disengages him from his immediate task. But there is a hint in his last words to Ophelia that the final probe of the king is to come.

(4) The image of another, besmirched and corrupted, wallowing in lascivious love, affects his behaviour with Ophelia. Ophelia is innocent but too docile. And Hamlet cannot bear to think that she should be a willing party to a dirty trick. Hamlet easily senses the situation.

## Scene II

**Argument** : Hamlet is in his normal mood again with the players whom he instructs in their art, valuing the importance of the play to be soon performed. He stresses naturalness, objectivity and sincerity, of feeling in presenting a passionate scene or episode. He warns them against playing to the gallery and against exaggeration. He disapproves the padding out of the usually improvized part of the clown.

After dismissing the players with the necessary instruction, he calls Horatio. He has kept Horatio informed of all that has happend since the appearance of the ghost. Now he desires Horatio to observe the king during the performance of the play. He confesses to an admiration of Horatio's balanced judgment and harmonious character. It is from feeling all the contrast between himself and his friend—and from his dispassionate and objective self-analysis, however, he may be swept by waves of passion.

The guests arrive, to witness the play, headed by the king and queen. The king has a friendly word for Hamlet, but Hamlet replaces him with a bitter jest. His words seem to point to unsatisfied ambition, the real cause of which is not apparent in the action of the play. When the play is ready to begin, Hamlet prepares to sit by Ophelia, and not by his mother as she requests him to do. Polonius draws the king's attention to it. Hamlet does not forget to play up to his role—that of a half-crazy man. He talks ribaldry to Ophelia. Ophelia treats him kindly and gently, taking his words rather as a part of good humour and wit. All that he cares to utter is his cynicism and hatred of women, with which Ophelia puts up as best as she can. He shows merriment in his running commentary of the play, and in making fun of the players.

The performance begins with a dumb show, setting forth the chief points in the action of the play. The connection between the allegorical action of the 'prelude' and that of the play might not be very plain. One might wish that things had been so arranged that the passage (as in the 'Mouse Trap'), which causes the unmasking of the king had come near the beginning. But it could not have preceded the exposition of the action and motivation of the 'play within the play'. It is an extraordinary kind of tragedy. A King, who loves his Queen tenderly and is —in contrast with Hamlet's murdered father—a tired old man, —exchanges tender words and protestations of affection with

the queen he had married thirty years before. He does so because he has had forebodings of death and thinks that his widow may marry again. She rejects such an idea with indignation. The king, as usual with an old man, talks everyday maxims such as intentions fading away with feeling that prompted them, the variability of human passions, the connection between happiness and love, and the reversal of human designs by an all poweful destiny. The queen begins to protest still more earnestly that she is horrified at the thought of a second marriage. Suddenly, without preparation, an evil-doer enters, whose wild gestures betray murderous intentions towards the old king, who meanwhile has fallen asleep. He does the murder before the eyes of the audience, speaking sinister words which give no clue to the reasons for his action. As there is no connection between this and the preceding scene between the king and queen, it would scarcely be intelligible if Hamlet did not provide a running commentary. The similarity of the situation to that in *Hamlet* is not made too obvious ; the murderer is not the brother, but the nephew, of the victim. The murderer's short soliloquy condenses his motives into a few catchwords. The characters are impersonal and puppet-like, the theme of *Hamlet* is repeated in part, but it is treated in a different key.

Now as to the effect of the play, the queen (Hamlet's mother) does not seem to be aware of any similarities. The king is disturbed and asks Hamlet—too late to tell him, more about the action. The farcical title, given to the tragic play by Hamlet, is typical of his sarcastic humour. When Hamlet tells the story with scarcely concealed contempt, it leaves the king hardly in doubt, for the words and gestures of the player—murderer bring him certainty. Hamlet notices a startled and ghastly look on the king's face, and with derisive triumph repeats what he has already said. Why should the king be disturbed ? It is merely the history of Duke Gonzago. But the king does not hear him. He is so upset that the queen becomes alarmed and Polonius commands the performance to be broken off. The play is over ; everybody departs and only Hamlet remains with Horatio.

Hamlet is wildly excited. Normal behaviour seems to be beyond his reach. His plan has so admirably succeeded. He might make a good actor—he has played the part of the innocent so nicely. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern re-enter, he jeers to hear of the illness of the king. Guildenstern begs him in vain to behave; Hamlet attempts to fool him with bland politeness.

His mood changes when Rosencrantz delivers his message, containing a reproof from his mother. Rosencrantz appeals to their old friendship, begging him to be open and frank with a hint that otherwise his own freedom might be at stake. When he alludes to unstisfied ambition, it does not satisfy Rosencrantz. Hamlet suddenly breaks off the conversation. He is going to have it out with the two agents of the king. He picks up a recorder, and begs Guildenstern to play upon it. Guildenstern excuses himself. There is much music in it, and Guildenstern cannot bring it out. Is he easier to be played upon than a pipe ? This is a straight reduff to Guildenstern and his fellow.

Polonius now arrives on the scene, and only increases Hamlet's irritation. The old man's obsequious hypocrisy is intolerable to him. He is fooled by being made to agree with any absurdities Hamlet utters. Polonius brings a messages from the queen who desires to see Hamlet. He is ready to see his mother. He has now a moment to see his mother. His brief soliloquy is charged with the mysterious atmosphere of the night of evil augury. He seems to have been transformed, and wild, bloodthirsty instincts seem to be clamouring within himself. But he is going to see his mother and must put a curb upon himself ; "I will speak daggers to her, but use none." He must bring her to her senses in any case.

## NOTES

1. **Speech**—the lines that have been composed by Hamlet and are going to be inserted in the play.

2. **Trippingly**—with a quick movement. **Mouth**—rant ; bluster.

3. **Had as lief**—had rather. **Town-crier**—one who proclaims public notices.

4. **Saw...hand**—make sweeping motions with the hand. **Thus**—Hamlet gives a demonstration.

5—6. **In the very torrent...passion**—when you are carried off by tide of passion. **Whirlwind**—tumult.

7. **Temperance**—moderation. In the excitation of emotion the player, as Hamlet recommends, shoulds maintain a balance.

8. **Robustious**—violent. **Periwig-pated**—the actor wore a wig in those days.

9. **Tear...tatters**—declaim violently.

10. **To split the ears**—true in the physical sense too. But the violent declamation appealed to the common spectators. **Ground-**

**lings**—the spectators who stood on the ground, and had no benches or seats. The price of admission was only one penny.

11—12. **Are...noise**—can enjoy only unintelligible dumb-shows and ear-spliting speeches.

13. **For o'erdoing termagant...Herod**—termagant the supposed god of the Mohammedans, and Herod, the slayer of the innocents, were staple characters in the old Miracle Plays. Their chief office was to rave and rant up and down the scaffold, uttering bombast of the most inflated and profane description.

15. **Warrant your honour**—assure your honour that it will not be done.

16. **Tame**—dull and lacking in animations.

17. **Let .. tutor**—let your native instinct be your guide. **Suit...action**—let your word and action keep pace, each interpreting the other.

19. **O'erstep...nature**—do not go beyond what is natural and moderate.

20. **So overdone**—done beyond the limit of nature. **From**—contrary to.

21—22. **To hold...nature**—to portray everything in nature and humanity as it is; to give the true image of nature. Faithful portraiture of life is the end of drama. **Pressure**—impression.

23. **Come tardy off**—weakly featured.

24. **Censure**—judgment.

25. **Allowance**—view. **O'erweigh ..others**—reduce to no value the opinion of the multitude.

27. **Profanely**—because they do discredit to their creator.

29. **Strutted and bellowed**-trod upon the stage and raved and thundered.

30. **Nature's journeymen**—journeymen are men who worked by the day ; so the hired workmen of nature.

32. **Imitated...abominably**—copied human speech and manner so badly.

33. **Indifferently**—fairly well.

36. **Your clowns**-N.B. Clowns in the days of Shakespeare used to make up jests and phrases of their own besides the speech assigned to them in order to afford amusement to the spectators. These additions made by them to their speech are called *gags*. **Will...laugh**—*i. e.*, invent some jests.

37. **Barren**—unthinking.

38. **Some...play**—some turn in the action of the play.

39. **Villainous**—extremely reprehensive. N.B. The giving of instructions to the players by Hamlet has practically nothing to do with the action. Shakespeare incidentally glances at some of the defects of Elizabethan actors—employing exaggerated gestures and false 'pathos'. Shakespeare appears to agree with Ben Jonson that there should be a closer approximation to the ideal of classic simplicity. The interlude might have served to open the eyes of the public, lured away by the competition of the troupe of boy-actors, to the scrupulous artistic merits of the acting of the Globe Theatre.

50. **Conversation**—intercourse. **Coped with**—encounted.

55—57. **Let the candied tongue . fawning**—let a servile feilow pay worship to the rich and bend his easy knows since he hopes to gain something for himself by his cringing. **Candied**—sugared. **Lick...pomp**—*i.e.*, flatter the rich. **Crook**—bend. **Pregnant**—flexible. **Thrift**—profit. **Fawning**—cringing.

58. **My dear......choice**—I could chose my friends independently and discriminatingly.

59—60. **Her election...herself**—my soul has adopted you as my friend.

61. **As one...nothing**—the stoic ideal of rising above joys and sorrows of life.

62—63. **A man......thanks**—a man who is indifferent either to the blessing or to the curse of fortune.

63. **Blood...commingled**—passion and reason are so coordinated.

64—65. **They are......please**—fortune cannot play upon them any tune she pleases (they are not at the mercy of fortune). **Stop**—a hole in wind instruments of music by which difference of pitch is produced.

66—67. **Give me...heart**—the man who is not ruled by passion—and here Hamlet contrasts himself with Horatio—is most acceptable to him. He says that he cherishes Horatio in his heart. Horatio is his counterpart.

68. **Something ..this**—I shall speak no more of it ; I have said enough.

73—74. **With...soul**—with the most searching observation you are capable of. **Occulted**—hidden.

75. **Unkennel** - disclose. *Kennel* is a dog's house.

79. **Vulcan's stithy**—the smity of Vulcan, the classical god of fire and metal working.

80. **Rivet**—fasten.

81. **After**—afterwards.

83. **In...seeming**—in an analysis of his looks.

8-—86. **If he steal...theft**—Horatio promises to observe the king closely. He will let none of the changing expression of his face escape him. If he does, let him be taken to task.

87. **Idle**—1 disengaged; (2) crazy. He will not appear to be engaged in talk with Horatio. Or he will play the half-crazy man.

88. **Chameleon's dish**—a chameleon was supposed to feed on air. It is a lizard which has the power of changing colour. **Promise crammed**—fed with promise. N. B. This is Hamlet's answer to the king's question—how fares our cousin? *Fare* means (1) he, (2) eat. Then in *promise...crammed*—there is the idea of stuffed cocks, and Hamlet says—you cannot—feed cocks on air. A capon is a castracted cork fattened for the table.

89. **I ..answer**—this answer is not fit for me.

90. **Nor mine now**-since these words have been spoken by me, they are no longer mine. I cannot unsay what I have said.

93. **Played . university**-a reference to the acting of plays at Oxford and Cambridge. *Hamlet* was played at both universities.

94. **Capital a calf**—*capital* is a play upon *Capitol* above.

96. **Capitol**—the Temple of Jupiter at Rome, on the summit of the Capitoline Hill. Shakespeare represents Julius Caesar having been murdered in the Capitol. Julius Caesar was murdered in the Curia Pompeii in the Campus Martius.

98. **Here's metal...attractive**—Hamlet prefers to sit by Ophelia. His witty way of saying this serves a double purpose—(1) confirming the notion of Polonius that he is in love with Ophelia (2) sitting by the side by Ophelia he can watch the king without attracting notice. **Do...that**—Polonius draws the king's attention to Hamlet's remark.

110. **You...lord**—Ophelia is tolerant of his bawdy witticism. Hamlet is mad, but seems to be merry in a frivolous way —so Ophelia thinks.

111. **Yours only jig-maker**—the only merry person here. *Jig* means here lively, jocular ballad.

116. **Suit of sables**—a costly suit, trimmed with furs, being frequently made of scarlet cloth. There is a play on the word—*sable*—which also means black, so there is the suggestion of a dress for old age. He implies that since his father died long ago, he must be an old man now.

120. **By 'r lady**—by the Virgin Mary. **Shall...on**—will be forgetten.

121. **Hobby horse**—in the morris-dance, a figure of a horse, made of light material was fastened round the waist of a performer, who went through various antics. The quotation is from a ballad, satirizing Puritan opposition to May-games.

**The Dumb-Show** : Why the Dumb-show here while Hamlet remarks that the groundling for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise ? The dumb-show had a symbolical and allegorical character and needed an 'expositor'. In a sense the dumb-show was quite popular ; it catered, for the insatiable love of spectacle in the public. What is the utility of the dumb-show here ? The dumb-show either dealt with action, not covered by the play, or and very rarely was a moral allegory of the action of the play. The murder in the very way Hamlet's father was murdered, and for the sake of the king's crown, is in the dumb—show, and should have struck Claudius at once. Perhaps Claudius did not pay sufficient attention to the dumb-show. He might be whispering with the queen or Polonius as to Hamlet and Ophelia. **Protestation**—swearing of love. **Declines**—rests. **Passionate action**—demonstration of grief. **Mutes**–persons hired to attend a funeral.

124. **Miching mallecho**—sneaking or skulking mischief. "To miche or secretly to hide himself out of the way, as Truants doe from school"—*Minshan*, Mallecho from Spanish 'Malhecha' evil-doing, misdeed.

**Prologue**—the *actor* who speaks an explanatory verse before the performance of a play.

126. **Argument**—theme.

128. **Cannot......counsel**—reveal everything.

131. **Naught**—naughty.

133. **Stooping......clemency**—appealing to your pity.

135. **Posy of a ring**—verse inscribed on the inner side of a ring.

138. **Full thirty times**—written in Senecan style. The rhyme, the rhetorical and stilted diction and moralizing are all here—and there are the characteristics of a Senecan tragedy. **Phoebus cart**—chariot of the sun-god.

139. **Neptune**—the sea good. **Salt wash**—salt sea. **Tellus**—the earth personified.

140. **Borrow'd sheen**—light borrowed from the sun.

142. **Hymen**—god of marriage.

143. **Commutual**—mutual. **Bands**—bonds.

145. **Cheer**—cheerfulness.

150. **Womens fear......quantity**—in woman's heart, fear bears equal proportion to love.

151. **In neither......extremity**—either they are non-existent or they know no limit when they exist.

152. **As my love......so**—my fear is of the same dimensions as my love.

157. **Operant**—active. **Their......do**—cease to function (the senses are failing him).

164. **Worn-wood**—a bitter and aromatic plant; hence bitterness.

165. **Respect of thrift**—consideration of money.

169. **You think...speak**—what you speak now reflects the present state of your mind.

171. **Purpose......memory**—we forget what we resolve, and fail to carry it out.

172. **Of...birth**—conceived in a moment of strong impulse. **Poor...validity**—feebleness. A resolution, formed in a moment of impulse and cannot last long.

175—176. **Most necessary...delet**—if the world is to go on, we should forget all that we promised to ourselves in a moment of impulse, and strong feeling.

177—178. **What to ourselves...lose**—when the resolution is born of passion or strong feeling, it will have no meaning when the strong feeling or excitement is no more.

180. **Enactures**—*i. e.*, resolution.

181—182. **Where joy ..accident**—joy or grief may be turned into its reverse in its extremity.

183—184. **'Tis not ..change**—love may vary with the circumstances in our life.

186. **Whether...love**—whether love is subject to fortune or circumstances of life, or love dominates fortune.

192. **Seasons**—ripens.

194—195. **Our wills...... overthrown**—fate foils what we will or purpose. By fate is meant the objective factor—all that is outside us, and may hinder us.

196. **Our thoughts ......own**—we may think of doing something, but it is another matter whether we shall be able to do it. Our objective may not always be within our reach.

200. **Sport......night**—let me be denied pleasure and sleep day and night.

201. **To desperation...hope**—let my hope and trust turn into despair.

202. **Anchor's.. scope**—let my fate be as that of an anchorite with scanty food for my sustenance and with no more liberty than allowed in prison.

203—204. **Each opposite...destroy**—let all that is inimical to joy, come in my way and ruin all that I wish well. **Blanks**—blanches ; makes to turn white.

205. **Both here and hence**—in this world as well as in the next. **Lasting strife**—perpetual unrest.

209—210. **I would...sleep**—I would spend the dull, heavy day in sleep.

212. **Never come...twain**—may nothing evil happen to separate us.

214. **The lady...much**—the queen does not like that the lady should have taken such a strong vow (not to have a second husband). She may be conscious of her own frailty in this matter.

217. **Offence**—nothing to offend our taste.

220. **Mouse-trap**—Hamlet invents the title in his sarcastic humour. The play is a trap to catch the conscience of Claudius. So it is quite fitting as the title of the play. **Tropically**—by way of a trope or figure ; metaphorically.

222. **Gonzago...name**—the story is that "in 1538, a Duke of Urbino who was married to Gonzaga, was murdered by one Luigi Gonzaga, who dropped poison into his ear."

223. **Knavish...work**—a devilish sort of play.

224. **Free**—innocent. **Let...wince**—a proverb. **Galled**—with a sore on the skin, caused by rubbing. **Jade**—overworked horse. **Wince**—flinch in pain. **Withers**—the highest part of the back of a horse between the shoulder-blades (irritated by the collar, worn by a horse).

227. **Chorus**—in a Greek play, a band of singers and dancers who interpreted the sentiments of the play.

229. **The puppets dallying**—at a puppet-show there was an interpreter whose duty was to make the action understandable to the audience.

230. **Keen**—sharp-witted.

233. **"The croaking raven...revenge"**—an echo of two lines in *The True Tragedy of Richard, the Third* :

> The screeking raven sits croking for revenge,
> Whole herds of beasts comes bellowing for revenge.

235. **Confederate season**—time abetting or collaborating.

236. **Of midnight...collected**—referring to herbs, collected by witches at midnight for charms and spells.

237. **With Hecates ban...infected**—thrice infected with the curse of Hecate. Hecate was identified with magic and witchcraft.

238. **Property**—attribute or effect attributed.

239. **On wholesome...immediately**—at once dispossess healthy, normal life.

241. **The story is extant**-the story has not been discovered.

245. **False fire**—"used of fire-works, blank-discharge of fire-arms, a fire or night-signal made to deceive an enemy."

246. **How...lord**—Hamlet repeats the very question that the king put to him when he came to the play. Hamlet feels triumphant. It is now his turn to strike home.

250. **The stricken deer go weep**—there was the idea that a hurt deer would withdraw to weep by itself. Hamlet compares the king to the stricken deer with his guilt detected, and himself to ' the heart ungalled".

252. **Some must watch**—Hamlet and Horatio have been watching the king so long. **Some must sleep**—the king's conscience has been sleeping till now.

254. **A forest of feathers**—feathers were much worn by actors in Shakespeare's time.

255 **Turn Turk**- prove false (like a renegade to Christianity). **Provincial roses**—rosettes of ribbon worn on shoes; the name was derived either from Province or Provins near Paris, both places being famous for roses.

256. **Razed**—slashed. **Fellowship**-partnership. **Cry**-company. **Would not this...sir**—Hamlet is very exultant for he has caught the conscience of the king in the play. It is, as he thinks, particularly the effect of a dozen or so lines of his inserted in the play. Now he takes pride in his theatrical gifts. So he says that if fortune goes against him, he can take to acting as a profession. He will wear plenty of feathers, and rosettes of ribbon on shoes.

257. **Half a share**—"The whole receipts of each theatre were divided into shares, of which the proprietors of the theatre, or house-keepers...had some; and each actor had one or more shares or part of a share, according to his merit."—*Malone.*

The actors, in fact, had no fixed salaries; the profits were divided into shares, and distributed among them according to ability.

260. **O Damon dear**—He calls Horatio Damon. Damon and Pythias were two inseparable friends. Pythias was condemned to death by Dionysius the tyrant, and was allowed to go home to arrange his affairs on condition that Damon took place, ready to be executed if Pythias did not return. Pythias was delayed ; Damon was led to execution, but Pythias turned up in time to save him. Dionysius was so struck with this honourable friendship that he pardoned both of them.

261. **Dismantled**—deprived.

262. **Jove**—he means his father.

263. **Pojock**—peacock. The peacock had an evil reputation in Elizabethan times.

270. **Recorders**—the recorder was a wind-instrument of the flute or flageolet kind.

272. **Pardy**—from *par Dieu i e.*, by God.

278. **Distempered**—out of humour or temper ; vexed. It also means ailing, sick. Hamlet takes that sense.

280. **Choler**—(1) Billious disorder ; (2) Anger. Hamlet takes the first sense.

282 **Purgation**—both ideas are combined : (1) cure (choler) by purging ; (2) clearing from the accusation of guilt.

283. **Put...frame**—talk with relevancy. **Start...affair**—do not shy away from the point.

285. **Tame**—submissive.

290. **This courtesy...breed**—it is not the right kind of courtesy we are receiving from you. Guildenstern is now getting insolent.

291. **Wholesome**—reasonable. **Do**—deliver.

296. **My wit's diseased**—since they know that he is mad, how can they expect a reasonable answer from him ?

300. **To the matter**—come straight to the point.

301. **Admiration**—a stronger word in Shakespeare ; it comes to admirableness.

303. **Sequel admiration**—anything following the admiration expressed by my mother.

307. **Were she—mother**-he will concede her claim to be his mother, though by her adultery and incestuous marriage she has earned but his disdain.

308. **Trade**—business.

310. **Pickers and stealers**—*i. e.*, hands, which the Church Catechism teaches us to keep from picking and stealing.

311. **Bar...friend**—a hint that he will be shut up in prison if he does not communicate his secret trouble to his friend.

314. **I lack advancement**—Hamlet humours their notion that he is ambitious.

315–316. **When you have .. Denmark** - Blackstone argues that Claudius should not be called a usurper who had deprived young Hamlet of his right by heirship to his father's crown. Hamlet calls him drunkard, murderer, and villain ; one who carried the election by law and mean practices ; had

"Popp'd in between the election and my hopes—;"

had—

"From a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket ;"

but never hints at his being a usurper."

317. **While the grass grows**—the proverb is : while the grass grows the steed starves. **Musty**—stale.

319. **To withdraw with you**—let us step aside.

320. **To recover......toil**—a metaphor from hunting : to drive the game (*e.g.* a stag) into net, the hunter must get to the wind-ward of the game, and the scent being carried by the wind, the game breaks off in the opposite direction where the net has been spread for it.

322. **If my duty .. unmannerly**—Guildenstern may mean his duty to the king and queen ; he may, therefore, be found to be insolent if in his friendship for Hamlet he gives a truthful answer. He may mean also that it is in the interest of Hamlet that he appears to be rude in the discharge of his duty. His love for Hamlet excuses hisrudeness.

330. **'Tis...lying**—if he finds it so easy to lie, can he not play on the pipe ?

334. **But then cannot I...harmony**—I cannot bring forth any music by fingering these stops.

336. **How unworthy...me**—you think of me as nothing when you want to play upon me but the recorder, a man-made musical instrument, baffles your skill.

338. **You would...mystery**—you cannot play upon recorder, but you think that you know and can bring out all the secrets of the human mind. There is also the implication that Hamlet can make nothing of his own mind.

343. **Compass**—scale.

344. **Fret**—vex. *Fret* also refers to a ring of gut (now a bar of wood) placed on the finger-board to regulate the fingering in instruments of the guitar kind.

347. **Do you see...camel**—Hamlet ignores Polonius's message, and leads him on, as he thinks, to humour him by saying yes to all designed absurdities that he utters.

349. **Mass**—sacrament.

354. **Then by**—since Polonius agrees with all that Hamlet says, he is ready to go to see his mother.

355. **They...bent**—Hamlet is aware that Polonius is just humouring him. There is also the idea that Guildenstern, Rosencrantz, Polonius, each in his own way want to take advantage of him and lure him to his room, if they can. **Bent**—inclination. The metaphor of stretching a bow to the final extent.

358. **By...said**—it is so easy to say *by and by* (*i.e.*, presently) Hamlet is fully conscious that the task of dealing with his mother, and detaching her from Claudius, if possible, will not be an easy one.

360 **Witching...night**—that part of night when witches and evil spirits are active.

361. **When...yawn**—when ghosts come out of the graves. **Hell itself**—*i. e.*, hell sends its infection into the world.

362. **Drink ..blood**—do acts of violence. This is but an exaggeration in which he indulges to invoke energy and resolution in him. Hamlet is not capable of any bloody deeds deliberately planned ; he has too many delicate scruples to negotiate.

365. **Lose...nature**—a moment ago he says that he can drink hot blood, and now at the moment of going to see his mother he says that he must keep the natural human feelings of his heart.

366. **Soul of Nero**–Nero was the emperor of Rome who had his mother, Agrippina, murdered. And there is the story that Nero piped while Rome burnt. **Firm bosom**—his heart, steady in its resolve not to do the least harm to his mother. He unconsciously remembers the ghost's warning to spare his mother.

367. **Let...not unnatural**—he is going to speak cruel words to his mother, but not to use any cruelty. His natural, human feeling will remain unimpaired.

369. **My tongue...hypocrites**—his soul will be full of commiseration for his mother's frailty, but his tongue will speak freely to her.

370. **Spent**—blamed ; reproved.

371. **To give them seals**—to confirm them in action.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) The purpose for which the play is performed is successful.

The king's guilt is brought to light. Now an interruption to the carrying out of his revenge occurs. He is summoned by his mother and his mother's guilt seems to dominate his mind at the moment.

(2) Instructions to the players keep his mind disengaged for a while—but they are all directed to the accomplishment of his purpose—the final test of the king's guilt, and the revenge to follow upon it. Transition from one mood to another, displaying alternately perfect sanity and violent education, marks out Hamlet. "There is a touch of genius in it."

(3) Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are about him here, but he turns unceremoniously from them to pay a deserved tribute to Horatio. His praise of Horatio shows but his power of dispassionate and objective self-analysis. But he does not forget his end. He begs Horatio to watch the king with the closest observation, during the play.

(4) Hamlet puts on his "antic disposition" when the king and queen arrive to see the play. He must mask his bitter resentment for this mother, "gay and bedecked for the occasion" making the best of her fading charms—and Hamlet refuses to sit by her in that case he cannot watch the king effectively. And Ophelia becomes the victim of his ribald jests. "He sees her now as the demure decoy, the hypocrite. the wanton at heart, and on her, at least, he can be swiftly and cruelly revenged."

5) The play is not only intended to catch the conscience of the king, but it is also a probe into the queen. They seem to stand it all right until at the end the king breaks down. H. Granville-Barker thinks that the king has not been inattentive to the Dumb-show and its significance, that he has ever been on the alert, and faces it out. He thinks too that the players bugle, and points to Hamlet's own demur—"The players cannot keep counsel. They'll tell all." Now if the king had stopped the play at the stage of the Dumb-show, he would have walked straight into the trap. All the while Hamlet goes on recklessly with his comments on the play, giving a vantage ground to the king. The ironic title of Mouse-trap gives away the whole show. At the end of the play, Hamlet boasts that he has scaled against the king. H. Graville-Barker points out that it is a barren victory, lacking its conclusive stroke and to be turned against the victor. In the short soliloquy that ends the scene Hamlet suspends his immediate revenge upon the king after disburdening himself with these words :

Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on.

He seems to concentrate his attention (another sudden change of mind) on his mother. "He will avenge, not a father's murder, but a husband's shame, hers too and his own, and gratify and exhaust and betray himself in doing so." In the meantime, the stricken deer, the king does not go to weep, but to take effective measures for his own safety and removal of Hamlet from Denmark.

## Scene III.

**Argument**: The king gives Rosencrantz and Guildenstern the commission, long since decided on, of accompanying Hamlet immediately to England. They readily accept the commission. Now Hamlet is on his way to see his mother. Polonius enters and tells the king that he will put himself behind the arras to overhear the conversation between mother and son – an action which, he thinks, has been wisely decided on. He promises to see the king again before going to bed.

The king does not seem to have his conscience totally deadened. He gives himself up to pious thoughts and heart-searching meditations, such as are suited to the hour of evening prayer. He is fully aware of the heinous nature of his crime, but he knows that he cannot pray Heaven for mercy so long as he enjoys the fruits of his evil-doing, and does not doubt that the day will come when judgment will be meted out to him. He clings too obstinately to what he holds for any genuine repentance. His conscience is not silent, but impotent, he can only take comfort in vague hopes of the future.

When he is on his knees in prayer, Hamlet appears on the scene. The two deadly enemies are alone together as they have not been till now and never will be again. The action which began at midnight, would seem to be nearing its end in the same gloomy darkness, and the drawn sword of the avenger to be about to fall.

But Hamlet does not strike because he finds his victim in prayer. The formula of true revenge is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Hamlet's father has been sent unprepared and unhouseled' to his death, and his spirt must now be going through all the torments of purgatory. To send this murderer

to his death at a moment that will save his soul would be no punishment at all. Reasoning on this line Hamlet lets slip the chance that has delivered his enemy into his hands. A moment later the king rises from his knees, little knowing how near he has been to death, and Hamlet is gone.

## NOTES

2. **To let...range**—to let him have freedom of action and movement in his madness.

3. **Your commission**—the warrant that they are carrying to the King of England.

4. **Shall...you**—the verb of motion is omitted.

5. **The terms of my estate**—my position as king.

6-7. **Hazard lunacies**—the hourly risk to myself and the state that his acts of madness involve.

8. **We ..provide**—we shall make ourselves ready.

10. **That live...majesty**—whose lives and means of living depend on the king's safety.

11. **She single...a life**—*i.e.*, every individual and private life.

12. **With...mind**—with all the resources that the mind commands.

13. **Noyance**—harm or destruction.

14—15. **That spirit.....many**—*i. e.*, the king on whose safety depend so many lives. **Cease**—cessation.

16—17. **Like a gulf...it**—death of a king is like a whirlpool that sucks in all that is nearabout.

**Massy**—massive.

20. **Mortised**—joined by putting a projecting part into a hole made to fit.

21. **Annexment**—all that is fixed. **Petty consequence**—the most insignificant part of the machinery.

22. **Boisterous**—noisy.

23. **General groan**—the suffering of all people.

24. **Arm you**—prepare yourselves.

25. **Fetters**—restrictions. **Fear**—object of fear.

26. **Which . free-footed**—which is now allowed too much liberty.

28. **Closet**—private room. **Convey**—hide.

29. **Process**—proceedings. **Tax him home**—give him a severe reproof.

31. **Meet**—proper. **Some more mother**–*i.e.*, a third party.

32. **Nature ..partial**-–*i.e.*, motherly nature or the relation between mother and son may have a bias.

33. **Of vantage**—from a position of advantage (from a position of hiding).

36. **Rank**—(1) luxuriant in growth ; overripe ; (2) sinking or smelling badly. **It heaven**—the idea of heaven being disgusted with the smell of his crime.

37. **Primal...curse**—refers to Cain's murder of his brother Abel—the first murder in the world. The curse he suffered is that he is an eternal wanderer on the face of the earth.

39. **Though...will**—throught. I am inclined to pray and have the strongest will too.

41. **Double business**—the necessity for prayer and his unwillingness to part with his crown and his queen, which are the trusts of his crime.

42. **Pause**—wavering. **Where...first**—should prayer come first or giving up my crown and queen. Unless he can give up his crown and queen his prayer will have little meaning.

43—46. **What if this cursed...snow**—how doubly or trebly defiled he might have been by murder of his brother, God must have mercy enough to wash away his sin and make him pure.

47. **Confront**—face and overcome.

49—50. **To be forestalled....down**—the twofold function of prayer is (1) to keep us out of sin when we are tempted ; (2) to forgive us when we have sinned. **Look up**—look up to heaven and hope for forgiveness.

51. **My fault is past**—the sin was committed in the past and it was done with ; so I can pray to God to be forgiven. **What form of prayer**—how can I frame my prayer ?

52. **Serve my turn**—apply to my case.

53—55. **That cannot...queen**–he has not surrounded what he possessed by his crime. How can he ask to be forgiven ?

56. **Offence**—the fruits of the crime.

57. **In...world**—in the unfair ways of life in the world.

58. **Offence's gilded hand**—*i.e.*, bribing of justice by the guilty. **Shove ..justice**–evade punishment, demanded by justice.

59—60. **The wicked prize...law**—ono enjoying the profits of crime buys immunity from punishment. **Above**—in heaven.

61. **There...sufflings**—in heaven there is no getting away from the effect of sin. **Action**—legal action or charge.

62. **In...nature**—no glossing over of the crime.

63—64. **Even......evidence**—to confess fully our sins and bear witness against ourselves.

**Rests**—remains.

65. **What...not**—what cannot repentance achieve ?

66. **Yet what.. repent**—Claudius is conscious that he is incapable of true repentance. True repentance will mean the discarding of the effects of crime.

68. **Timed**—caught as with bird time ; ensnared in sin.

69. **Engaged**—entangled. **Assay**—trial.

70. **Stubborn**—unyielding. His stiff knees symbolically express his unyielding mood. **Heart ..steel**—heart encased in steel, and therefore, calloused by crime.

71. **Sinews**—nerves.

73. **Pat**—readily or fittingly.

75. **Scann'd**—examined carefully.

79. **This.. revenge**—this would be acting the part of a hired assassin, not of one who kills for revenge.

80. **Grossly**—unpurged of sin. **Full of bread**—compare. "Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness." *Ezekiel, xvi*, 49. Fulness of bread means sensuality.

81. **Broad blown**—in full blossom. **Flush**—lusty.

82. **Audit**—account (*i.e.*, the position in which his soul stand—to be accepted or rejected by God). **Save**—except.

83. **In our circumstance thought**—in terms of the condition of human existence and judgment.

84. **'Tis heavy with him**—the odds are against him.

85. **Season'd**—matured ; made ready. **Passage**—passage to heaven.

88 **A more horrid hent**—*hent* may mean either clutch, grasp or intention.

91. **That...in 't**—which can give him the least chance of saving his soul.

92. **Trip him**—overthrow him. There is the idea of the

physical action of causing to stumble. **His heels...heaven**—*i.e.*, he may dive down to hell.

93. **His soul...black**-his soul may be cursed and blackened with sin.

95. **This physic**—the remedy he applies *i.e.*, sparing him until the right moment for killing him arrives.

96. **My words . below**—his prayer is nothing but mere words—the words not substantiated by a change of heart. His prayer, therefore, could not have reached God.

**Points to be noted** :

(1) The king seems to be rather quick enough for Hamlet. There is confirmation of the king's guilt apart from the ghost's revelation, but before Hamlet can sweep to his revenge, the king takes measures to send Hamlet to England.

(2) The point is why Hamlet does not kill Claudius when he comes upon the latter in prayer. It is the best chance he could have. The reasons given by him, may not satisfy many today, and it is taken as a further proof of Hamlet's procrastination. Schucking writes, "that the reasons given here by Hamlet for not carrying out his revenge are perfectly sincere and genuine cannot be doubted. If the superstition of Elizabethan times, which accorded an immense significance to conduct at the moment of death, be taken into account, there is no cause for seeing in his own explanation any subjective grounds on the score of which Hamlet is merely excusing to himself his inability to act."

## Scene IV

**Argument** : Polonius withdraws behind the arras after giving the queen a word of advice about dealing with Hamlet who will at any moment appear. Hamlet behaves like one insane as he enters his mother's chamber. In his bitterness of spirit he receives her words of censure rudely. His mother loses her temper, her maternal dignity affronted, and makes as though to leave the room, with a veiled threat to send others to him. Hamlet forces her down in her chair, and in sudden fear she cries out for help. And it costs Polonius his life when he responds to her cry. For Hamlet suddenly plunges his sword, through the arras, and Polonius is killed. The deed is done without Hamlet's having any clear idea of the identity of the eavesdropper. It might be the king himself. But he is soon

disillusioned. However, he has little time to bestow on the unfortunate Polonius.

Hamlet turns to his horrified mother, who attempts in vain to make him realize the terrible nature of what he has done. He charges his mother with being implicated in the murder of his father ; she knows nothing of it ; she has not been a party to it, nor, has she been let into the secret by Claudius. Of course, the thought of her complicity in the murder does not count much with him. Neverthele<s, his mother is guilty in his eyes because she has committed a deadly sin by marrying her husband's brother. He castigates her unmercifully and humiliates her by holding up her actions to shame.

The queen seems to be deeply shaken morally by his reproaches. Hamlet now speaks daggers. He describes her erotic pleasures and all the disgust evoked in him. She now stops her ears with her fingers and implores him to spare her. He then denounces the king. At this moment, the ghost appears. Hamlet is filled with awe. He confesses to the ghost his being remiss in his duty. The ghost simply concerned with revenge ; he counsels Hamlet to be gentle towards his mother. The queen does not see nor hear the ghost, and naturally concludes that in his fit of frenzy Hamlet is addressing the air. Hamlet soon becomes calm enough to demonstrate to her that he is not insane. He goes on, preaching to her contention and self-abasement, not without hope that he is making her a convert, telling her what to do in expiation of her sin. It is for her to cultivate a new habit, which she can start by breaking off her relations with the king. His rage by this time has somewhat cooled, and he expresses regret at the death of Polonius while he says that it is after all a dispensation of Providence.

It appears that Hamlet knows of the commission which is to deport him to England. He has his misgivings that the plan conceals a dangerous plot against his life. Yet he is filled with exultation for in the contest he begins to see in his imagination his enemies falling into the trap, laid for him. He finally takes leave of his mother, and drags away the body of Polonius.

## NOTES

1. **Look...home**—give him a severe reproof and see that he smarts under it.

2. **His pranks...with**—his mischievous acts have been too wild to be tolerated.

3. **Screen'd**—protected.

4. **Much heat**—the stern displeasure of the king. **Sconce**—hide.

5. **Be ....him**—speak to him without reservation.

7. **Warrant**—assure.

11. **Come...tongue**—be sensible for you are talking foolishly. **Idle**—foolish ; careless.

12. **Go, go**—a cry of impatience.

13. **Why, how now**—what do you mean ?

14. **Rood**—cross.

16. **Would...... so**—if it had not been so.

18. **Budge**—move. Hamlet farces her down into the chair.

19—20. **A glass...you**—his words will be the mirror that will reveal the inmost depth of her soul.

23. **What, ho**—Polonius responds to her cry for help.

24. **Dead for a ducat**—dead without question. He is ready to stake a ducat on the matter. **Ducat**—a gold coin formerly in use in most European countries—equivalent to about 9s. 5d. in Holland, Russia, Austria and Sweden ; also a silver coin in Italy, worth about 3s. 6d.

29. **As kill......brother**—Hamlet charges his mother with being a party to his father's murder and marrying her husband's brother. Hamlet knows that his mother had nothing to do with the murder of his father, but is not sure that she might not have been later let into the secret by Claudius.

30. **'Twas my word**—I meant it in all seriousness.

31. **Intruding fool**—because Polonius poked his nose into the affairs of others.

32. **Thy better**—*i. e.*, the king. **Take your fortune**—it is the fate you deserve.

33. **Thou......danger**—now you find that it is dangerous to interfere in the affairs of others.

35. **Wring your heart**—Hamlet means to give her heart a twinge by his words of reproach and bring her to sense of reproach.

36. **Penetrable stuff**—material open to sensibility. **It it... stuff**—if your heart is capable of receiving impressions.

37. **Braz'd**—made hard as brass.

38. **Proof and bulwark**—like armour of proof and a fortification against feeling.

39. **Wage......me**—abuse me so violently.

41. **Blurs .....modesty**—puts modesty to shame.

42. **Calls......hypocrite**—makes virtue (chastity) appear a sham. **Rose**—symbolical of the fairness of innocent love.

44. **Sets a blister there**—alluding to the practice of branding harlots in the forehead.

45. **Dicer's oaths**—oaths of gamblers.

46. **Contraction**—contract of marriage. **As from...soul**—as reduces a marriage vow to an empty form and ceremony.

48. **A rhapsody of words**—charged with extravagant emotion a mere vapouring. **Glow**—burn with shame.

49. **This solidity...mass**—the solid and compact earth.

50. **Tristful visage**—woe-begone face. **Doom**—Judgment Day.

51. **Thought...sick**—distracted.

52. **That roars...index**-that in the very preface raises such a clamour. **Index**—a table of contents. In Shakespoare's time the index of a book was placed at the beginning, and not at the end.

54. **Counterfeit presentment**—*i.e.*, portrait. Does Hamlet point here to the full-sized portraits of the two brothers or present miniatures only ? Verity writes, "......some actors make Hamlet tear the miniature of Claudius from the Queen's neck and fling it away or stamp on it. But the description of the elder Hamlet, especially 58—62, certainly indicates a portrait on the will, it is just possible that Shakespeare knew the gallery of portraits in the castle of Elsinore."

56. **Hyperion's curls**—the curly hair of Hyperion, the sun-god. **Front**—forehead.

57. **To threaten and command**—to inspire awe in the beholders and command their obedience.

58. **Station**—attitude in standing. **Herald Mercury**—Mercury in the messenger of the gods.

59. **New-lighted**—just alighted. **Heaven-kissing**—reaching in height near enough heaven.

60. **A combination...indeed**—a combination of graces and attributes and figure to admire.

1. **To set his seal**—to give his approval.

2. **Assurance of a man**—the definite presentation of man.

3. **What follows**—(1) what comes next ; (2) what you have done.

64. **Your husband**—*i.e.,* Claudius. **Mildedw'd ear**—a

blade of corn eaten through by mildew (a sort of fungus found on plants and decaying substances.

65. **Blasting.........brother**—the elder Hamlet is a perfect, sound man, and the neighbourhood of his brother, who is 'a mildew'd ear', seems to wither his brother. The elder Hamlet is the sound corn ; his brother is the mildew'd corn.

66. **On this fair mountain**—Next Hamlet compares his father to a fair mountain, and his brother to a moor, and points to the depraved taste of his mother in exchanging the mountain for the moor. He alludes to her gross sensuality. **Batten**—fatten. **Moor**—there may be a quibble on *moor* in the sense of a black—a moor.

69. **Heyday**—state of excitement. **Tame**—dull ; languid.

70. **Waits...judgment**—is subject to reason.

71. **From this to this**—from the mountain to the moor—from his father to Claudius. **Sense**—sense-perception.

72. **Motion**—desire ; inclination ; emotion.

73. **Apoplex'd**—paralysed.

74. **Nor sense...thrall'd**—nor sensibility could be so enslaved by frenzy or madness.

75—76. **But it.........difference**—but it could not have entirely lost the sense of distinction between my father and Claudius. He means to say that his mother could not have been so blinded by frenzy of passion as not to see the world of difference between his father and his father's brother.

77. **Cozen'd**—deceived. **Hood-man blind**—blindman's buff (a game in which one who is blindfolded, must catch and name one of the other players).

79. **Sans**—without. **Smelling all**—*i. e.*, she has only the sense of smell which is so strong in lower animals.

81. **Mope**—be in a state of bewilderment ; go about or act aimlessly.

82. **Rebellious hell**—Hamlet means that the instinct that was uppermost in his mother, led to her degradation, must have been prompted by the devil.

83. **Mutine**—rebel. **Matron's bones**—middle-aged woman whose passion is exhausted.

84. **To flaming... was**—for a young person, full of the heat of passion, virtue may melt away as wax.

86. **Compulsive ardour**—intensity of passion. **Gives the charge**—makes an assault upon virtue. **Charge**—metaphor of a quantity of powder exploding at one time.

87. **Frost**—he compares his mother to *frost* because at her age, she should be as chill as frost *i. e.*, passionless.

88. **Reason panders will**—reason is made to subserve passion.

89. **Thou......soul**—you have revealed the inmost depth of my soul to me.

90. **Grained**—fast in dye or colour.

91. **Tinct**—tincture.

92. **Stew'd in corruption**—grovelling in sensuality. **Honeying**—indulging in dalliance of love.

93. **Nasty sty**—Hamlet can only think of the pig swallowing in gabage in connection with the gross sensuality of his mother. It was a filthy life that she was leading.

94. **Like daggers**—an unconscious echo of Hamlet's own words.

95. **A murderer and a villain**—he has brought his mother to her senses. Now he denounces Claudius.

96. **Tithe**—tenth part.

97. **Precedent**—previous. **Vice of kings**—a clown or buffoon of a king. The Vice, a character in the Old Morality Plays, played tricks on the Devil—beating him and trying to pare his long nails with a dagger.

98. **A cutpurse rule**—a usurper who has murdered the lawful king.

99. **Diadem**—crown. **That.....stole**—a thief of the king's crown.

101. **A king......patches**—the same idea as a vice of kings, alluding to the patched garment, worn by fool.

102. **Save me......wings**—Hamlet again invokes the protection of angels at the appearance of the ghost. Does his doubt still resist, or is it but an instinctive horror of bare contact with the ghost ? His doubt that it is an evil spirit from hell, must have been now dispelled.

105. **Tardy**—slow in action.

106. **Lapsed.....passion**—retarded by circumstances of life and the melancholy passion or the fit of morbid excitement that comes upon him now and then. Verity explains—"sunk in delay and mere emotion".

107. **Important**—urgent.

110. **What**—sharper. **Blunted**—dulled or deadened.

111. **Amazement...sits**—your mother looks distracted.

112. **Step......soul**—protect her from the agitation of her mind or she may break down.

113. **Conceit**—imagination.

115. **Alas...you**—the queen seems to be quite self-possessed. And she asks what is happening to Hamlet.

116. **Vacancy**—void ; empty air.

117. **With .....discourse**—talk to the bodiless air.

118. **Forth......peep**—your eyes express the terror of your soul.

119. **In the alarm**—suddenly alerted.

120. **Bedded**—lying flat. **Excrements**—outgrowths.

121. **Start......end**—bristle up.

122—123. **Upon...patience**—bring your wild excitement of mind under the control of patience. **Distemper**—disorderly state of mind. **Whereon...look**—the queen neither sees nor hears the ghost, perhaps because of her impurity of life.

124. **How pale he glares**—Hamlet has noticed the paleness of the ghost before ("a countenance more in sorrow than in anger"—as Horatio puts it). *Glare* means a fierce, piercing look.

125. **Conjoin'd**—combined.

126. **Capable**—capable of feeling ; susceptible.

127. **Piteous action**—pathetic look.

128. **Stern effects**—unrelenting purposes.

129. **True colour**—native appearance (*i. e.*, of blood).

131. **Yet... ..see**—I see all that is material and visible.

132. **Nothing but ourselves**—we heard nothing but ourselves talking.

134. **Habit**—dress. He is no longer in his armour. N.B. In the *Introduction*, the question why the queen could not see the ghost has been dealt with exhaustively.

136. **Coinage .....brain**—what has been invented by your imagination.

137. **Bodiless creation**—fantasy. **Cunning**—skilled.

139. **My pulse .....time**—Hamlet offers the test of his insanity. The normal beats of his pulse show him to be in possession of his senses. **Temperately**—measurely.

140. **Healthful music**—beats at a due interval which indicates the health or sanity of my mind.

142. **Re-word**—repeat in the same words.

143. **Gambol**—deviate. **Par...grace**—if you value God's mercy.

144. **Flattering unction**—salve or ointment which promises relief, but gives none, therefore, self-deception.

145. **Trespass**—offence.

146. **Skin and film**—*i.e.*, form a thin layer of skin over the surface of the sore. **Ulcerous place**—running and open sore.

47. **Rank corruption**—taint growing fast (inside). **Mining**—undermining; eating into. **It will but...unseen**—the taint of moral evil is working within her: Hamlet tries to make her realize this. If she takes comfort in the self-delusion that Hamlet is speaking madness she will but let the taint grow apace to the damage of her soul. It is spoken in terms of a running, open sore, which instead of being healed by a salve not efficacious, infiltrates, and damages the whole system.

149. **Avoid......come**—seen no more.

150. **Compost**—manure. **Weeds**—the idea of going to damnation by self-indulgenee like making weeds grow faster by manure.

152. **Fatness......pursy times**—*Pursy* is short-winded, and a man who grows fat, is short of breath; here is the picture of bloatedness, produced by self-indulgence. (Compare Ophelia's words—"a puff'd and reckless Libertine." Hamlet is speaking here of the moral degeneracy of the age in the image of a person getting bloated by self-indulgence.

153. **Virtue......beg**—*i.e.*, a virtuous person must beg to be excused by an unvirtuous person.

154. **Curb**—from French *Courb*, which means to bow or bend. **Woo for leave**—beg permission.

155. **Cleft**—split open.

156. **Throw away.. .. it**—throw away the sinning part of the heart. This is from the idea of good and evil struggling for supremacy in the human heart.

157. **Live.. ...half**—rely on the good half of the heart and live a continent life.

159. **Assume virtue**—put on the garb of virtue, if you do not have virtue in your nature.

160—164. **That monster, custom, etc.**—Custom is practice that generates habit. It is monster because it consumes all natural feeling. It is a devil in giving us bad habits which we cannot get rid of. But it is an angel in the sense that it gets us used to the doing of good, which is compared to a new garb that is put on, and finally fits, us. **Frock**—as the frock of a priest. **Livery**

—the dress of a servant. So there is the idea of doing good from a religious instinct (*frock*) or as a duty, demanded by the master (*livery*).

165—166. **And that .....abstinence**—Hamlet shows here how custom can be an angel in certain matters. He tells his mother to keep away from Claudius tonight, which may cause her some uneasiness, not which she will find much easier to do next night. **Abstinence**—refraining from indulgence of passion.

167. **For use...nature**—daily practice (which soon grows into a habit) transforms the original nature of a man.

168. **Master the devil**-get under control the evil working in you. **Throw out**—eliminate the evil.

169. **Potency**—power.

170. **When......bless'd**—when you seek the blessing of God by renouncing evil.

171. **I'll......you**—Hamlet will not let his mother bless him until she reforms herself and seeks the blessing of God.

172. **Heaven .....so**—God as ordained.

173. **To punish...this**-the killing of Polonius fills him with unhappiness, and this is his punishment. **This with me**—*i.e.*, to punish the meddlesomeness of Polonius by me as an instrument of God.

174. **Scourge**—originally, a whip used to inflict pain or punishment; so an instrument of punishment. **Minister**—agent (of God).

175. **Bestow**—hide. **Answer well**—(1) explain; (2) have all the responsibility for.

178. **Thus bad begins**—refers to the killing of Polonius, which is bad enough. **Worse... behind**—*i. e.*, the killing of Claudius. First, he kills the agent of Claudius; next, he is going to kill Claudius. It is, of course, a mysterious hint to the queen, and she can make nothing of it.

181. **Pinch......cheek**—caress you by pinching your cheek lewdly. **Mouse**—a term of endearment.

182. **Reechy**—foul.

183. **Paddling**—stroking fondly.

185. **Ravel......out**—disentangle, or make clear or plain all the mystery about me.

187. **But mad in craft**—purposely mad to gain my ends. Compare Guildenstern's words—'crafty madness'. Hamlet

seems to have an uncanny sense of what the people round him are doing about him. He echoes here the very words, used in Guildenstern's report to the king.

**'Twere......now**—ironical.

189. **Paddock**—toad. **Gib**—cat. Gib is a contraction of Gilbert.

190. **Dear concernings**—matters of great importance to the king.

191. **In despite of**—in defiance of.

192. **Unpeg**—take off the peg.

193. **Famous ape**—N.B. the ape has not been traced J.D. Wilson has this note : "The story is lost, but Hamlet makes the outline clear ; the ape carries a cage of birds to the top of a house, releases them by accident, and, surprised at their flight, imagines he can also fly by first creeping into the cage and then leaping out. The point for the Queen is the publicity of the proceeding ("on the houses' top"—in full view of everyone), and that letting the cat out of the bag will involve her own destruction."

194. **Try conclusions**—make experiments.

197—199. **If words...me**—the queen makes a strong protestation. Words are uttered by human breath, and breath is the essence of life. She promises to waste no breath of hers in revealing what Hamlet has said.

202. **Whom......fang'd**—Hamlet knows well that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are the worst villains he has got to deal with. **Adders**—serpents. **Fang'd**—toothed.

203. **Mandate**—commission. **Sweep...way**—clear the path before me.

204. **Marshall**—conduct. N. B. Hamlet suspects some foul trick. He has got to outwith them, and he is confident of doing so. So he says that the villainy of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern against him will drive me into villainy against them for self-protection.

205. **Enginer**—engineer.

206. **Hoist**—he hoisted (lifted up). **Petar**—small engine of war used to blow in a door or to make a breach. Hamlet means that he will get Rosencrantz and Guildenstern caught in their own trap.

207. **But**—unless. **Delve**—dig. **But......mines**—*i. e.*, his counterplot will be such a one as to smash them totally.

209. **When in one...meet**—when the craft of one encounters the craft of another in a contest of wit.

210. **This man**—Polonius. **Packing**—plotting ; also going away from Denmark. He is going to conceal the dead body of Polonius, and there will be trouble over it—and he will have to resort to a trick.

211. **Lug**—drag. **Neighbour**—neighbouring.
214. **Prating knave**—a fellow given to idle talk.
215. **To draw...you**—to dispose of you finally.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) The spring of the tragedy seems to be touched in Hamlet's laying bare the inmost depth of his mother's soul. He says that there seems to be little reason why she should be so infatuously and sensually in love with her husband's brother, a 'pajock' as he calls him (which is an unconscious admiration of the plausible gift and accomplishments of Claudius, likely enough to capture the fancy of a sensual woman). H. Granville-Barker writes, "...poor Gertrude's blood was not tame. In this, the story of the play is rooted, and much of its meaning will be missed if the point is not from first to last kept clear."

(2) Hamlet might have revealed to his mother the murder of his father by Claudius. He is diverted from it by the killing of Polonius. We cannot guess what the queen's reaction would have been if she had heard the actual story of the murder.

(3) The visitation of the ghost puts Hamlet into a softer mood. He feels for his sinning mother, but his compassion expresses itself in irony.

(4) How Hamlet comes to know that he is being packed off to England is a mystery. But there is a hint of what is coming—Hamlet's own counterplot to defeat the designs of Claudius.

## ACT IV. SCENE I

**Argument** : The scene follows immediately upon the preceding one. Day has not yet dawned. The king enters the queen's room, and finds her in a state of collapse. She acquaints him with the events of the night. In doing so she shields her son as far as possible dwelling on his abnormal condition, she also stresses his good qualities, recalling the tears he has shed for what he has done.

The king listens to her without expressing any sympathy for Polonius. He is more concerned about himself. He would have shared the fate of Polonius ; it was a lucky escape for him. Now there is the problem of Polonius's murder to be answered. He regrets that he has till now treated with a certain tolerance the goings-on of Hamlet and that things have reached this pass. He decides to delay no longer in sending Hamlet to England.

He summons Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He bids them look out for the dead body of Polonius and persuade Hamlet to surrender it. The dead body is to be then brought to the chapel. He is going to summon the council again, and take necessary measures to deal with the situation. In any case, he must take care that he is not directly or indirectly involved in the murder of Polonius.

## NOTES

1. **There's matter .. sighs**—there must be some meaning for these sighs. **Heaves**—long-drawn sighs.

2. **Translate**—explain.

4. **Bestow...while**—leave us alone for a moment.

6. **How...Hamlet**—the king is not anxious to know how Hamlet is doing, whether anything is wrong with him, but is impatient to find out whether he is up to any new tricks.

7. **Mad...contend**—as mad as the sea when it is lashed into fury by the wind ; and each strives against the other.

8. **Lawless fit**—fit of frenzy.

11. **Brainish apprehension**—wild excitement. **Brainish**—rash.

12. **O heavy deed**—no word of sympathy for Polonius, king will be called to account for the murder of Polonius. How to shelve it—that is his concern.

13. **It...there**—if he had been in the place of Polonius, he would have shared the same fate. He is more concerned about his personal safety, and expresses no regret at the death of Polonius.

16. **How...answer'd**—his main problem is to keep out of any blame or responsibility for the death of Polonius. **Answer'd**—explained. It is true that Hamlet on his own has killed Polonius. But the king cannot escape responsibility. Hamlet has been known to be mad. Why has not the king put him under restraint ?

17. **It......us**—*i. e.*, we shall be blamed. **Providence**—foresight.

18. **Kept short**—curtailed the liberty of. **Out of haunt**—away from any public resort.

19—20. **So much...fit**—we were blinded by love, and we did not do our duty in the circumstances.

21—23. **But, like the owner...life**—it was like concealing some bad disease and letting it eat into our vitals. **Pith**—substance ; vitality.

25. **Ore**—*i. e.*, gold. **Like some ore**—she suggests that Hamlet, though mentally deranged, has still some good element in him.

26. **Mineral**—mine.

31—32. **We must .....excuse**—by exercising my royal power and with the best of tact we must face this murder and satisfy the public with good reasons.

33. **Join ..aid**—take the assistance of some other people.

36. **Speak fair**—speak gently.

37. **Chapel**—the Church attached to the palace—not a public Church.

38. **Call...friends**—he is going to summon the council.

39. **What ..do**—the steps we are going to take.

40. **What's...done**—the murder of Polonius.

42. **Blank**—the white or centre of the target.

41—44. **Whose whisper...air**—There are two things about which the king is very much concerned. First, he must make sure of his personal safety and must send Hamlet immediately to England. Secondly, he must not let himself be directly or indirectly charged with responsibility for the murder of Polonius. He must give slander no chance to breath his name in connection with the murder.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) The death of Polonius makes little difference to the king. He has not a word to waste on Polonius. He is most anxious to bid for his own safety.

(2) The murder of Polonius is a problem, but the king knows how to deal with it satisfactorily. He is going to summon the council for the purpose. But it comes very handy to him in disposing of Hamlet—the permanent menace to his own safety.

## Scene II

**Argument :** Rosencrantz and Guildenstern tackle Hamlet about the dead body of Polonius. But they find it not so easy to get any information out of Hamlet. They are greeted with contemptuous jibes. They are hoaxed by baffling indications only. Finally, they leave it to the king to question Hamlet. Hamlet behaves here as like anything but a sane man. Yet however wild and erratic he may appear, his mind keeps all its acuteness.

### NOTES

1. **Stoved** – concealed.

6. **Compounded** – mixed and dissolved. **Whereto...kin** – for man is after all dust.

11. **Keep your counsel**—Does he mean that he did not betray to the king the confession made by Guildenstern (II, iii. 285) ? **Not mine own**—He will reveal nothing of what is in his mind, (nor will he give them away). It is all but baffling to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet is secretive in his own way—and always cautious in dealing with these two spies, but he makes no secret of what he thinks of them.

12. **Sponge**—Hamlet calls Rosencrantz a *sponge* because he soaks up the king's favour and reward by conveying to him information (about himself). **Replication**—reply.

15. **Soaks up**—as a sponge soaks up water, so they secure the king's favour, rewards and authorities. They are the mere tools of the king.

17—18. **He keeps...swallowed**—Hamlet warns them of their fate. The king is simply exploiting them. He will throw them out when they are of no more use to him. The king, like an ape (there is the idea of the mischievousness of the king), keeps them in the concern of his mouth, munches them (like nuts) and swallows them. So after they have served his purpose the king is going to finish them. J. D. Wilson reads *apple* for *ape* and suggests that it is the picture of groundlings, gnawing or sucking little pippins in the theatre.

19. **Gleaned**—collected.

20. **You shall...again**—that is the use the king makes of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They are to spy on Hamlet and give their report to the king. The king gets out of them all the information they can gather. So they are compared to a sponge.

When the king squeezes the information out of them, they are dry and empty again.

22. **Knavish**—(i) mischievous ; (2) subtle. **Sleep...ear**—carries no meaning to a foolish person.

26—27. **The body... body**—This is a sample of knavish speech. What Hamlet means is lost upon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Probably, Hamlet means that Claudius is a king in mere name and title—that he is no more than a body (a mere bodily existence), but has no kingly qualities (*the king is not with the body*). This explanation seems to be confirmed by what he says next—the king is a thing. J. D. Wilson explains in another way : "the body, *i. e.*, Polonius, is in the next world with the king, my father, but the other king, my uncle, has not yet joined him there."

29. **Of nothing**- a thing of nothing. (1) It is a worthless king. (2) He will soon be nothing *i e.* cease to exist. **Hide fox**—a cry in some children's game like hide-and-seek. With these words Hamlet bolts.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) Hamlet is cautious, but he is now in a defiant mood. He baffles the two creatures of the king, but seems to have little consideration for his own safety. Schucking thinks there is "a definite deterioration in Hamlet's mental condition."

(2) Hamlet behaves like a typical madman in the scene. He openly shows his contempt of the king, and since he knows his fate—he is going to be shipped to England in the company of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, his revenge seems to be foiled. He has but a vague idea of outstripping Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and finally defeating the king's game.

## Scene III

**Argument** : Rosencrantz comes first and reports to the king that Hamlet will not reveal the dead body. Then Guildenstern enters with Hamlet. The king now questions Hamlet. Hamlet puts him off with replies that his macabre fancy supplies. He dwells on the ultimate fate of man, to be eaten by worms in the grave, the same fate awaiting the fat king and the lean beggar. The king's patience is finally exhausted. It is elicited that the dead body is somewhere near the staircase leading to the lobby.

The king loses no more time in informing him of his banishment to England. Hamlet seems to listen with a fatalistic apathy. His pre-occupation of mind is shown when he takes leave of Claudius with the words—'dear mother'. He certainly means farewell to his mother. But Claudius corrects him by putting in 'thy loving father'. Hamlet turns his words into a trivial jest. The king's soliloquy at the end of the scene breathes a sense of relief, for he expects the king of England to carry out his mandate.

## NOTES

2. **Goes loose—**is at liberty.

3. **Ye must not......him—**we cannot have him tried on a charge of murder.

4. **Of.. multitude—**by the thoughtless rabble.

6. **Who like...eyes—**who choose by the eye, and not by reason anyone to love.

5. **Where...so—**where the choice is made, not from reason but from mere sense impression. **Scourge—**punishment. **Weighed—**taken into consideration.

7. **To bear... even** - to avoid all unpleasant consequences.

9. **Deliberate pause—**a step taken after deliberate consideration.

10. **Desperate appliances—**drastic remedies.

20. **Not where...eaten—**the worms are having a supper upon Polonius. Polonius is in the grave where worms are feeding upon him.

21. **Convocation of politic worms—**assembly of worms, and politic worms are those who feed on politicians. Politic may mean also crafty (in choosing on whom they are to feed). A fling at Diet of Worms (1521) at which Martin Luther appeared before Charles V.

22. **Your—**colloquial. **Your worm...diet—**the worm has the best food in the world—is an emperor in this matter. **Fat—**fatten.

23. **Maggots—**worms.

24. **Variable—**varied. **Service—**food that is served. The worm feeds upon the fat king and the lanky beggar ; they are but different dishes for the worm.

25. **That's...end—**(1) that is the fate awaiting us ; (2) that is all I have to say.

26. **Alas, alas—**the king thinks that Hamlet is gone too far in madness.

31. **Progress**—a roval journev of state. Hamlet traces the state journey of a king (after his death), first through worm (as the worm feeds upon the dead king), and then through the fish (that swallows the worm)

34. **The other place**—*i. e.*, hell.

36. **Nose**—smell.

39. **For...safety**—in your own interest.

40. **Tender**—regard ; have a case for.

44. **Associates**—companions. **Tend**—attend.

46. **So is it.. purpose**—for your good we are sending you to England. We know what the king's purposes are in sending Hamlet to England, but Hamlet does not. But Hamlet suspects that Claudius is playing a deep game.

47. **I see a cherub, etc.**—the cherub is a very keen-eyed angel. The cherub sees what the king's game is and will certainly protect Hamlet or give him the necessary warning. **But, come ; for England**—He accepts his fate as nothing can alter it. His calm resignation is deceptive. He has already said—I see a cherub that sees them. He speaks in enigmas, Hamlet here seems to be the master of the situation. **Farewell, dear mother**—His mother is not there, but he addresses his farewell to her. For his mother he feels, and for none else in Denmark. His mother is on his side. Claudius wishes that he should not forget his loving father in his farewell. Claudius is playing with his victim, but the tables will be soon turned upon him. There is unconscious irony here.

51. **Man...flash**—a hint of the purely carnal relations between Claudius and Gertrude.

53. **At foot**—closely. **Tempt...aboard**—entice him to get into the ship as quickly as you can.

55. **Everything is seal'd**—the letters of commission are sealed.

56. **Leans on**—relates to.

57. **If my love...ought**—if you set any value on my love.

58. **As...power**—superior power shown in making the king of England a vassal. **Give...sense**—make you quite sensible.

59. **Cicatrice**–the scar of the would (inflicted upon England). **Looks...red**—has not yet healed. **Since...red**—*i.e.*, England has not yet recovered from the effects of Danish invasion.

60. **Free**—unenforced.

61. **Coldly set**—lightly esteem.

62. **Process**—order. **Imports**—signifies.
63. **Congruing...effect**—agreeing in purport.
65. **Hectic**—wasting fever (tuberculous). **In......rages**—in reference to the heat of fever.
67. **Howev'er may haps**—whatever may befall me.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) The king, with the plan well in hand that will send Hamlet to death, is now quite self possessed, there is no sign of nervousness.

(2) The encounter between Claudius and Hamlet is intriguing. Claudius's self-confidence, sure as he is of the success of his plan, givss him a cool and sinister tone, with the superficial appearance of affability, and it is more than matched by the enigmatic coolness of Hamlet, added to his sharp-sightedness. It almost persuades us that Hamlet will win in the end.

## Scene IV

**Argument** : When Hamlet is on his way to the ship that will take him to England, he meets the forces of the Norwegian Fortinbras marching through the territory of Denmark against Poland. He inquires the cause of this war, and he is told that it is all a question of honour, for the gain to be made, on which so much is being staked is but trivial. This gives him matter for deep pondering. He begs two companions to go ahead and pauses behind.

He reproaches himself for remaining passive so long, and compares the action of Fortinbras with his own. A man is no better than a beast if he has no other end than sleeping and feeding, and the god-like reason in him remains used. He does not know whether he should charge himself with beastly forgetfulness, or timid scrupulousness, or speculating too much about the result. He has the right cause impelling hint to act, and possesses the will and strength and necessary means ; and yet he remains passive. Here is the example of Fortinbras who speculates little about the result, and makes nothing of his danger—and all this for a mere slice of land, And he has got to avenge the murder of his father and the dishonour of his mother—and he is keeping quiet. He is going to drift no more. Nothing will satisfy now but the blood of the murderer.

## NOTES

2. **License**—love.
3. **Conveyance**—passage.

4. **Rendezvous**—meeting-place.
5. **Would . ...us**—would desire to have a talk with us.
6. **Express our duty**—give our respects. **In his age**—in his presence.
8. **Softly**—at a slow pace.
9. **Powers**—forces.
11. **How purposed**—for what purpose are they being used ?
15. **Main**—the country as a whole.
17. **Addition**—exaggeration.
19. **That hath...name**—from which nothing is to be gained materially but honour.
20. **Farm**—rent.
22. **A ranker rate**—a richer value. **Fee**—fee simple (right of absolute) possession.
26. **Debate**—settle.
27. **Imposthume**—an internal abscess or tumour. **This ......peace**—increase of wealth and prolonged peace lend to degeneracy.
28. **That.... breaks**—the metaphor of the inward abscess, which bursts inside and causes the death of the patient, while there is no sign of decomposition outside.
32. **Inform .....me**—give evidence against me.
33. **Spur**—stimulate.
34. **Market.... time**—(1) the best use he makes of his time ; (2) that for which he sells his time.
36. **Discourse**—the faculty of reason.
37. **Looking......after**—*i. e.*, looking forward to the future and looking back to the past.
38. **Godlike reason**—reason which is a gift of God to man ; reason is therefore divine.
39. **Fust**—grow mouldy.
40. **Bestial oblivion**—forgetfulness which characterizes a beast. **Craven scruple . event**—timid, scrupulous analysing of the consequences of action. **Event**—result.
42—43. **Quarter'd**—divided ; analysed. **A thought... toward**—Hamlet describes his own approach to the problem of revenge as a good deal of passive thinking, which, if analysed, will be found to be a mixture of wisdom one part and cowardice three parts.
44. **Why yet......say**—it is time that my revenge had been accomplished long ago. N. B. The self-reproach in accomplishing his revenge is after all urged by his impatience. There have

been repeated diversions, thanks to the manoeuvring of Claudius. Hamlet seems to overlook them. His self-reproach for delay is seized upon by most critics, and Hamlet is blamed for procrastination. It is forgotten that Hamlet has little control over events which deflect his revenge.

45. **Sith**—since. **Cause**—the murder of his father and the dishonour of his mother. **Will and strength**—he has the will or purpose and strength to accomplish his revenge. **Means**–it is not clear what his *means* or resources are. Does he mean the support and encouragement of the ghost and his filial duty (which certainly urges him most to accomplish revenge)?

46. **Gross as earth**—too plain and obvious. **Exhort**—admonish.

47. **Mass and charge**-drawn up in massive array for assault

48. **Tender**—young in age.

49. **Divine ambition**—Hamlet thinks of ambition as an instinct from above or God-inspired. **Puff'd**—animated.

50. **Makes mouth at**—defies. **Event**—resuit.

51. **What unsure**—*i. e.*, his own life.

53—56. **Egg shell**—a small slice of land.

**Rightly to be great stake**—On a question of honour even a trivial matter should demand satisfaction; this is the sign of greatness. Not to fight unless we are satisfied that it is a valid cause is not to be great. Hamlet is thinking of himself as being not satisfied with the evidence of the ghost or with the identity of the ghost without more positive proof before going into action. **Argument**—cause for action. **Straw**—trivial matter. **At the stake**—compromised.

57. **Stain'd**—dishonoured.

58. **Excitements...... blood**—incentives to my reason and feeling.

60. **Imminent**—impending.

61. **Fantasy...... fame** - the fancy and lure of fame.

63. **Try the cause**—settle the dispute.

64. **Continent**—receptacle; that which contains.

66. **My thoughts .. worth**-let me cherish no other thought in my mind than that of bloody revenge. N. B. Hamlet is now being shipped to England. How is he going to execute his revenge? He seems to have a mysterious faith and instinct that he cannot be baulked of his revenge. He drops a hint of it to his

mother ('to have the enginer hoist with his own petar') and Claudius too ('I see a cherub that sees them.')

**Points to be noted :**

(1) Hamlet reflects upon the contrast between himself and Fortinbras ignoring, however, the difference in circumstances. The point which he seizes upon is honour that is at stake. Hamlet has got to vindicate his father's honour, his mother's and his own too. And there is nothing of 'bestial oblivion' visible in him. But he is acting in a different set of circumstances, which he should not have forgotten with his acute capacity for objective analysis and observation,

(2) from this time forth.

My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth,

Upon negation of all he has been and believed in until now, not envious any longer of 'blood and judgment...well commingled,' but just of brute capacity for deeds of blood, we part from him. A changed and hardened man ; yet not so changed."

—*H. Granville-Barker.*

## Scene V

**Argument** : We should suppose an interval of weeks, perhaps months when this scene begins. Fortinbras by now has completed his campaign ; Laertes has returned from Paris. The atmosphere at the court is rather terse : there is a sense of approaching calamities. The death of Polonius, never explained and his secret burial, have bred suspicion and discontent among people, endangering the position of the king. The queen's equanimity has been shaken since her terrible scene with Hamlet—and she seems to be living in a world, peopled with terror.

Ophelia gone mad, makes her way singing into the queen s chamber with wild gestures and disordered hair. The suspicion of the king that something is brewing is soon borne out ; rebels are knocking at his doors. Laertes breaks into the palace, sword in hand, crying for vengeance—and already hailed as king by his supporters. He holds the king responsible for his father's death. The king finds himsell defenceless. The queen throws herself between the king and the intruder. But Claudius roundly faces Laertes and talking reasonably and dispassionately brings him into a mood to listen to him.

Ophelia bursts in again at this moment; singing snatches

of songs and scattering flowers. Her sad, pathetic condition arouses in her brother the bitterest indignation, which nothing but immediate vengeance could sway. Claudius keeps him in hand and excites his hatred of Hamlet as the murderer of his father. The king is ready to submit the matter to an impartial body, and to give up his crown and life if it is found that he is directly or indirectly involved in the murder of Polonius—and promises to give every satisfact:on to Laertes prov.ded he abides by his counsel.

## NOTES

1. **I will...her**—the queen does not want to admit Ophelia (now mad) to her presence. She is oppressed by forebodings. The sight of mad Ophelia cannot but embarrass her.

2. **Importunate** - very pressing. **Distract**—distracted, out of her mind.

5. **Where's...world**—that means a vague suspicion about her father's death. **Hems**—expressive of doubt or hesitation, as done by a half cough of clearing of the throat. **Beats her heart**—a gesture of lamentation.

6. **Spurns...straws**—*i. e.*, expresses her fretfulness by kicking. **Speaks ..doubt** - speaks ambiguously.

7. **Her speech...nothing**—she speaks nonsense.

8—9. **The unshaped...collection**—her incoherent words lead the hearers to gather a meaning.

10. **Batch**—contrive, however, clumsily. **Fit...thoughts**—match what they are thinking.

11. **As her winks...them** *i. e.*, supplemented as they are, by her winks, nods and motions.

12. **Make...thought**—make one conclude that she is striving to express a thought.

13. **Though......unhappily**—though nothing definite ean be made out, yet the idea of some sad and tragic happening is formed.

15. **Dangerous conjectures**—wild guesses which may lead to trouble. **Ill-breeding**—suspicious.

17. **Sick soul**—soul burdened with the sense of guilt. So Hamlet has been to awaken her dormant conscience.

18. **Toy**—trifle. **Prologue........miss**—harbinger of some calamity.

19. **Artless jealousy**—suspicion betraying itself.

20. **It spills......spilt**—it betrays itself, while trying to guard itself.

23. **Know**—distinguish.

25. **Cockle hat**—hat with a scallop-shell stuck in it, worn by pilgrims as a sign of their having been to the shrine of St. James of Compostella in Spain. A lover often put on the disguise of a pilgrim's dress.

26. **Shoon**—shoes.

27. **What...song**—what is the meaning of this song ?

29. **He is dead**—refers to the death of the lover. Ophelia confuses with it the death of her father, while she has lost her lover in Hamlet. Her lover, lost in Hamlet, and her father dead are mixed up in her mind.

35. **Shroud** —winding-sheet.

36. **Larded**—garnished.

41. **God ild you**—God reward you ! **The owl . daughter** —the story is this : Jesus asked for bread at a baker's shop ; the mistress put some dough in the oven, but her daughter cut down its size, but the dough seemed to grow bigger and bigger miraculously—and the daughter started hooting like an owl, and was finally transformed into an owl by Jesus.

42—43. **Lorn ..be**—we may discover some meaning in Ophelia's words : the baker's daughter little knew that she would ultimately be turned into an owl, and Ophelia little foresaw that she would come to such a sorry pass. **God... table**—may God bless your table ! It may be a prayer by a guest before sitting down to the table. Ophelia might also be thinking of the baker's inhospitality. **Conceit**—imagination.

46. **St. Valentine's day**—February 14 is St. Valentine's day. The girl first seen by a man on St. Valentine's day became his Valentine or love for the rest of the year.

53. **Lay him...ground**—she is thinking of her father in his grave.

55. **Come, my coach**—Ophelia imagines herself a great lady, driving away in her coach after her visit.

59—60. **This...grief**—her mind has been infected by her grief for her father's death.

61—62. **They come...battalions**—they come in a great host or a vast army, and as spies singly.

63—64. **He...remove**–*i.e.*, his violent deed responsible for his removal. **Muddied**—confused in mind (from the metaphor of standing water in a pond which has been disturbed). It might

mean also full of dirty suspicions (as in the next line *unwholesome* suggests).

65. **Thick...whispers**— possessed by sinister suspicions.

66. **Greenly**—rashly.

67. **In hugger-mugger**—secretly. **Inter**—bury.

68. **Divided...judgment**—alienated from self-possession and deprived for her reason.

69. **We...pictures**—we are like pageants, moved by strings.

70. **As much...these**—of no less importance.

72. **Feeds...wonder**—keeps his amazement growing by listening to all confused rumours about his father's death. **Keeps...clouds**—holds himself off mysteriously (enters into no communication with others).

73. **Buzzers**—those who whisper tales in the ear.

74. **Pestilent**—foul. *Pestilent* is suggested by *infect* above.

75–77. **Of matter beggar'd**—looking reality. **Nothing stick**—stick at nothing; make no scruple. **Our person to arraign**—to condemn us personally. **Where in...ear**—since they have no facts to substantiate the current rumours, they will necessarily attack us personally and go on spreading reports.

78. **Murdering-piece**—small cannon or mortar.

79. **Superfluous death**—death long drawn out.

80. **Switzers**—guards. The Swiss offered themselves as mercenaries to foreign monarchs. The Swiss formed the body-guard of the King in France. "In many of our old plays the guards attendant on kings are called 'Switzers'."

82. **Ovepe ring of his list**—crossing over the boundary.

83. **Eats**— wallows up. **Flats**—low-lying lands.

84. **In a rictous head**—with an armed force.

85. **O'erbears**—beats down.

86. **As the world**—as if the world.

87. **Antiquity**—the tradition of the past.

88. **Ratifiers ..word**—may be taken with (1) antiquity and custom; or (2) the rabble—the followers of Laertes.

90. **Caps...clouds**—they throw up their caps, wave their hands and cry with their tongues.

92. **How cheerfully...cry**—a metaphor from the chase; the supporters of Laertes are compared to a pack of hounds following a false trail.

93. **Counter**—hunting term, following the trail in a direction opposite to that which the game has taken.

96. **Give me leave**—permit me to see the king by myself.

100. **That drop...bastard**—if a single drop of my blood does not get heated on this matter of my father's murder, it will declare me not a true son of Polonius.

101. **Cuckold**—one, whose wife is faithless. **Brands**—in reference to the branding (marking with a hot iron' the brow of a harlot.

102. **Unsmirched**—spotless.

104. **Giant-like**—formidable.

105. **Let him go**—Gertrude stands between the king and Laertes. **Fear**—fear for. **Our person**—my safety.

106—108. **There's such...will**—the king is protected by God, and a traitor may intend, but cannot do harm to him. **Hedge**—encircle. **Treason**—a trator. **Peep...would**—contemplate a design against the king. **Acts...will**—cannot put it into action. A veiled allusion to the divine right of kings.

109. **Incensed**—enraged.

110. **Where...father**—the king brings Laertes into a soft and rational mood without difficulty.

112. **Demand his fill**—ask all that he wants to know.

113. **I'll...with**—I will have nothing to do with a tricksy answer.

114. **To bell...devil**—he repudiates his loyalty to the king.

115. **Conseience.. pit**—let his conscience and the good of his soul go to hell.

116. **I...damnation**—I am ready to risk my salvation. **To this...stand**—all that matters is this.

117. **Both the worlds**—this world and the next. **Give to negligence**—throw away.

118. **Let...comes**—whatever may happen.

119. **Stay**—prevent.

121—122. **For my means**—as for my means. **I'll husband...littie**—I will make the little of my resources go a long way. **Husband**—economize.

123—124. **The certainty...death**—the fact and circumstances of your father's death. **Is 't...revenge**—does it come within the scope of your revenge?

125. **Swoopstake**—drawing the whole stake at once; hence indiscriminately.

128. **To his good ...... arms**—my friendliest welcome I extend to his friends.

129. **Life rendering pelican**—the pelican will feed her young on the blood, drawn from her breast.

130. **Repast**—feed or nourish.

131. **Gentlemen**—men of noble birth.

133. **Most...it**—deeply effected by his death.

134. **It shall...pierce**—it will penetrate straight to your reason. A metaphor from shooting at the blank of the target.

135. **Day—delight.**

137. **O heat...brains**—the sight of mad Ophelia sears his brains—is too painful for him to see. **Salt**—bitter.

138. **Burn...eye**—blind my sight. **Virtue**—power.

139—140. **Thy madness...beam**—I will exact the heaviest vengeance for your madness till the balance is upset. **Beam**—the bar of a balance on which the scale pans are hung.

142—143. **It's possible...life**—the death of his father and the loss of his sister's sanity came almost simultaneously, and Polonius now sees that the sanity of young maiden is as subject to death as an old man's life is mortal.

144—146. **Nature...loves**—Nature (*i.e.* human nature) has fine sentiments in love and sacrifices a valuable part of it for love. Ophelia sacrifices her sanity in her love for her father.

147. **Barefaced**—it was a custom to carry a maiden barefaced to the grave.

148. **Hey non nonny** - refrain of old ballads.

151. **Wits**—sanity.

152. **It could...thus**—it could not be so persuasive.

155. **Wheet**—burden or refrain. **False steward**—an allusion to some old ballad. **O' how...it**—*i.e.*, the spinning wheel and song fit together

157. **This nothing's...matter**—she has been talking nonsense, but her nonsense is more persuasive than if she had been talking sense.

158. **Rosemary**—a token of remembrance.

158. **Pansies**—symbol of thoughts.

160—161. **A document fitted**—her madness, offering flowers for remembrance and thought, is quite instructive and meaningful. Grief for her father is the cause of her madness, but it is crossed by love that went away. The love-strain seems to be

more marked—the confusion of ideas resulting from insanity. **Document**—instruction.

102. **Fennel**—symbol of flattery and deceit. **Columbines**—symbol of faithlessness in marriage.

162. **Rue**—a symbol of (1 sorrow ; (2) repentance. **Herb of grace**—called also *herb-grace*. It was used in exorcisms, and also denoted the grace of repentance.

163. **With a differene**—difference a (heraldic term) means alteration or addition to a coat of arms to distinguish a younger or lateral branch of family.

166. **Daisy**—emblem of deceit.

167. **Violets**—emblem of faithfulness While Ophelis offers the rue and daisy to the queen—and it seems to be so appropriate, she wants to offer violets to Horatio.

168. **They withered...died**—her father comes back into her memory while she is thinking of love, faithlessness, repentance, etc. Love and filial affection keep crossing in her mind. **Made . end**—a proverbial phrase.

168. **For bonny sweet Robin**—a popular ballad of Shakespeare's day.

169. **Thought**—melancholy. **Passion**—suffering. **Hell itself**—Laertes means hellish pain, not evil with which hell is identified.

170. **Turns .....prettiness**—lends beauty and grace.

177. **Flaxen**—resembling flax from which linen is made. **Poll**—head. **All .....poll**—he was white-haired.

180. **God ha .. soul**—many epitaphs end with these words.

183. **Commune...grief**—bear a part in your grief. **Go... apart**—go by yourself.

185. **Make......will**—choose any of the wisest friends you please.

186. **They shall......me**—let the dispute be referred to them and let them judge whether I am to blame in the matter of your father's death.

187. **Collateral**—indirect.

188. **Touched**—implicated.

190. **In satisfaction**—to make amends ; in reparation.

191. **Lend us**—patiently abide by my counsel.

192. **To give........content**—to satisfy your desire for revenge. **Let......be**—I am content.

194. **His means of death**—how he came by his death. **Obscure burial**—no public burial.

195. **Trophy**—emblem or memorial placed over a grave. **Hatchment**—square or diamond-shaped tablet displaying the armorial bearings of a deceased person.

196. **No noble .....ostentation**—no pomp and ceremony attending his funeral.

197. **Cry ...heard**—demand explanation.

198. **Call 't......question**—challenge it.

199. **And where .....fall**—let punishment be meted out to the offender.

**Points to be noted**:

(1) Claudius's very throne is shaken by the rebellion, headed by Laertes. The danger from Hamlet's presence in Denmark could not have been so acute as this one. But Claudius is too astute a politician to be nonplused. He soon manages to calm Laertes's rage, and a little later Laertes is made use of in the king's move against Hamlet when the latter is suddenly back again in Denmark.

(2 Ophelia's madness is a new crop-up in the play. She is driven mad by her father's death, which has been so mysteriou to her, and over which there has been so much of hush-hush. Till now Ophelia has kept in the background, but her madness, following upon the death of her father, brings her into more vital relation with the action of the play. The king's plot in collaboration with Leartes against Hamlet's life is jeopardized for a moment by the clash between Hamlet and Laertes over Ophelia's funeral in a later scene.

## Scene VI

**Argument**: Horatio is visited by some sailors. They hand him a letter from Hamlet. From this letter Horatio learns that Hamlet is back again in Denmark. The incident as related by Hamlet is this: there was an encounter with a pirate ship on his voyage to England; in the course of a fight Hamlet boarded the pirate ship, and the pirate ship called off with Hamlet as prisoner. The pirates have landed him in Denmark, but they expect a good turn from him. Hamlet requests Horatio to conduct the sailors to the king, and then to see him immediately.

## NOTES

4—5. **I do not...Hamlet**–Horatio imagines that the sailors must be bringing letters from Hamlet, and from none else.

8. **He shall......him**—the first sailor means to say that he will have God's blessing if Horatio will do the service expected from him.

12. **Overlooked this**—glanced through this letter.

13. **Some means to the king**—*i. e.*, access to the king.

14. **A pirate**—some critics suggest that this chase by a pirate was arranged by Hamlet so that he might hoist the enginer with his own petar. But nothing in Hamlet's letter seems to support this view. **Appointment**—equipment.

15. **Finding .....sail**—being unable to outstrip the pirate ship. **Put...valour**—fought as best as we could in the circumstances.

16. **Grapple**—encounter. **Boarded them**—entered the pirate ship. **On the instant**—at once.

17. **Got .....ship**—sailed off, leaving behind our ship.

19. **Thieves of mercy**—merciful thieves.

20. **I am......then**—I am to do them some service *i. e.*, (requite them for landing me safely in Denmark).

21. **Repair**—come.

22— 3. **Words .....dumb**—*i. e.*, a disclosure that will stupefy you. **Yet are......matter**—*i. e.*, words are too inadequate to convey what the matter is. The *bore* is the calibre of a gun ; the matter (Hamlet wants to communicate to Horatio) is a large gun, and the words used in conveying the matter, are but too light charge, for the gun.

26. **Hold ..England**—proceed on their voyage to England. There is no hint that the circumstances are now changed for them.

29. **I will......letters**—I will conduct you with your letters to the king.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) Fate seems to bring back Hamlet to execute his revenge upon the king. Before parting from his mother, Hamlet dropped a mysterious hint that he was going to defeat the plot against him. He suspected that there was something behind the king's sending him to England, and in a vague way thought of a counterplot, depending on circumstances.

(2) Unmistakable is the dramatic irony of the king's confidence that he has safely disposed of Hamlet.

Do it England ;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me.

Hamlet has returned, but the king rises to the occasion. Laertes is to become a tool in his hands. This second plot against Hamlet invites his own doom and the doom of Laertes too. And the enginer is hoisted with his own petar.

SCENE VII

**Argument** : The king has succeeded in his manoeuvring. He tells Laertes why he could not proceed against Hamlet on a charge of murder. First, the queen is too fond of him. Secondly, people bear him great love. A messenger arrives with letters from Ham.let. That Hamlet has returned, suits their purpose very well Laertes is rash, and would have jumped up at the idea of wreaking immediate vengeance upon Hamlet. The king easily wins him over to a devilish plot. Hamlet who is known to be jealous of Laertes' skill in fencing, is to be lured to a fencing test with Laertes. That is the king's plan. Laertes will take up an 'unbated' rapier, which Hamlet might fail to notice. Laertes, readily falling in with the foul trick of the king, goes on better. He offers to poison the weapon so that there can be no escape for the victim. They seem to be competing in villainy now. To put the crowning touch to the plain, the king says that he will have a cup of poison ready for Hamlet in any case.

No sooner has the diabolical plot been completed than the queen brings the tragic news of the death of Ophelia. The demented girl, wandering by a stream, leant out to hang her garlands upon the willows and lost her footing ; then she was carried away by the stream without any effort to save herself, and was finally drowned. Laertes, a moment ago consumed by anger, is now numbed by grief. Twice he asks for confirmation that she has really lost her life, and hastens away, ashamed of tears ready to burst.

## NOTES

1. **Acquittance**—release from complicity in the murder of Polonius. **Seal**—confirm.

3. **Knowing—**intelligent.

5. **It..... appears**—it is quite credible.

6. **Feats**—implying acts of madness.

7. **Capital in nature**—entailing the sentence of death.

8. **As by...else**—as demanded by your personal safety, your wisdom and every other consideration.

9. **Stirr'd up**—incited.

10. **Unsinew'd**—not sufficiently valid.

12. **Lives...looks**—is too fond of Hamlet, and unable to bear separation from him.

13. **My virtue or my plague**—I do not know whether it is my virtue or a curse that I suffer from.

14—16. **She 's so conjunctive...her**—she is a very part of my being, and I cannot do without her. **Conjuctive**—closely united. An astrological term : two planets are conjuctive when they are in the same direction as viewed from the earth. **Sphere**—orbit of a planet. **I could......her**—*i. e.*, the impulse for movement as a planet is communicated by her.

17. **Count**—trial.

18. **General gender**—common people.

19. **Dipping...affection**—forgetful of all his faults in their insensate love for him.

20. **Like the spring**—a reference either to the Dropping Well at Knaresborough or to the baths of king's Newnham in Warwickshire.

21. **Gyves** chains ; therefore, vices deserving imprisonment. **Graces**—virtues.

21—24. **So that my arrows...them**—any steps that I might have taken to punish him, would have rebounded on me (I would have provoked popular wrath by punishing him—and it would have spelled disaster to me). **Timber'd**—of too light a wood : therefore, of light weight. **So loud a wind**—*i. e.*, popular opposition. **Reverted**—returned.

26. **Desperate terms**—madness.

27—29. **Whose worth...perfections**—if I were to praise all that she was, her virtues might challenge the age to present another as perfect as she was

30. **Break...that**—you need not keep awake at night to have your revenge.

31—33. **We are...pastime**—we are so meek and passive that we shall calmly put up with any pranks threatening our very life and honour, and pass them lightly by. **Let...shook**—let

ourselves be affronted or let our authority be set at naught. **Danger**—power to harm. **Think it pastime**—take it all as fun.

34. **We...ourself**—I have a care for my personal safety.

40. **Claudio**—how is it that this fellow is named Claudio, while the king is Claudius ? A carelessness on the part of Shakespeare.

44. **Naked**-without any attendant ; without my companions.

46. **Recount .....return**—tell you of the incident that brought me back suddenly and miraculously to Denmark.

49. **All the rest**—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, etc.

50. **Abuse**– deception.

51. **Hand**—handwriting

54. **I...it**—I do not know what to make of it.

55. **It warms...heart**—it puts life into my desponding heart ; it warms or enlivens me to revenge.

56. **I shall live**—'warms' above gives the idea of the pulsation of life within him. **Tell...teeth**—the idea of accusing him of the foulest crime (the murder of Polonius) and challenging him at the same time.

57. **If it . so**—if Hamlet has really returned.

58. **As how...otherwise**—he cannot make how Hamlet has returned, and yet how it can be otherwise when he himself writes that he has returned.

60. **So you will...peace**–provided you do not prevail upon me to make peace with Hamlet.

61. **To...peace**—I will persuade you to a course of action that will give your mind perfect satisfaction.

62. **Checking ..voyage**–abandoning his voyage. *Check at* is a term in falconry—used of a hawk that leaves its quarry and flies at a chance bird that crosses its path.

63. **Work him**—stir him up.

64. **Exploit**—venture. **Now ripe...device**–fully worked out in my mind.

65. **He...fall**—he cannot but meet with death.

66. **For his death...breath**–none can be put to blame for his death.

67. **Uncharge the practice**—leave us free from guilt of any plot ; suspect no plot on our part.

69. **Organ**—instrument of his death.

70. **It falls right**—it comes pat.

73. **Your sum of parts**—all your accomplishments put together.

74. **Pluck...him**—draw such jealousy from him.

75. **Regard**—estimation.

76. **Of...unworthiest siege**—least estimable. **Siege**—seat, and therefore, rank.

77. **A very riband...youth**—some accomplishment that may set off a young man.

78. **Yet needful too**—yet a young man should not be without this quality.

80. **Weeds**—dress.

81. **Importing...graveness**—indicative of his wellbeing and gravity.

84. **Can well**—*i. e.*, manage well ; are skilled.

85. **Had...in't**—displayed marvellous or superhuman skill in horsemanship.

86. **Wondrous doing**—marvellous trick.

87. **Incorpsed**—made into one body. **Demi-natured**—sharing half the nature of.

88. **Topp'd my thought**—outstripped my conception.

89. **Forgery...tricks**—imagining the variety of tricks and postures. **That I...did**—I could never have imagined the tricks and poses he performed.

92. **Lamond**—Some read into it an allusion to one Pietro Monte, an Italian riding master at the court of Louis VII of France. Dover Wilson discovers in it a compliment to the Earl of Southampton, created Master of his Horse by Essex in 1599, while in Ireland. "The brooch indeed..." will go well with Southampton.

93. **Brooch**—in Shakespeare's time, a brooch was worn as an ornament in the hat.

95. **Made...you**—confessed your superiority.

96. **Masterly report**—report of supreme skill in fencing.

97. **Defence**—art of fencing.

100 **Scrimers**—fencers.

101. **Motion**—movement of the body acquired by drill and training. **Guard**—posture of defence. **Eye**—accuracy of aim.

103. **Envenom...envy**—enrage him with jealousy.

108. **Are you...sorrow**—is it only a mere demonstration of grief that you are making ?

109. **A face...heart**—it is the face that bears the semblance of grief while the heart is hollow.

111. **Love...time**—love grows with time, and love also wanes with time.

112. **Passages of proof**—circumstances that test the truth of love.

113—116. **Time qualifies...still**—Time diminishes the strength of love ; the flame of love is snuffed out in course of time (as the wick that feeds the flame of a candle burns out). Nothing keeps at the same level of excellence always.

117. **Pleurisy**—surfeit ; superabundance.

118—119. **Dies...too much**—dies in its excess. **That we ...would**—what we resolve to do, we should carry out at once. **This 'would" changes**—this resolve alters.

120—121. **And hath...accidents**—suffers diminution and postponement from human opposition and accidents.

122. **This "should"...sigh**—the unexecuted resolve or what should have been, remains undone becomes a matter of self-reproach to us—ends in sighs that drain off our blood.

123. **Hurts by easing**—sighs were supposed to cause the loss of blood. Sighs might give relief, but drain away blood. **Quick...ulcer**—quick means here living, and Hamlet is described as ulcer—a living sore to Claudius and Laertes.

127. **To cut...church**—it means that Laertes will not spare Hamlet even if he seeks asylum in a church. The church cannot give Hamlet sanctuary.

128. **No place ..sanctuarize**—Claudius's words are rather ambiguous. Does Laertes mean that he would seek asylum in a church after murdering Hamlet ? or does he mean that the church will give no sanctuary to the murder of Hamlet ? Claudius takes the first sense. In the next line he says that there should be no bar to revenge. He evidently draws a distinction between *murder* and *revenge*. He wants to persuade Laertes to revenge that will not take the shape of open murder.

129. **Keep close...chamber**—keep your own room, and do not go about.

131. **Put on**—move. **Those**—those who.

132. **Set...on**—exaggerate highly.

133. **Bring...together**—bring you together finally.

134. **Remiss**—neglectful.

135. **Contriving**—plot.

136. **Peruse**—examines. **Foils**—a foil is a long, slender fencing weapon with a blunt point.

137. **Shuffling**—practising trickery.

138. **Unbated**—without the button usually fixed to the end of a foil. **Pass of practice**—a treacherous thrust, also implying a pass in which you are so skilled.

139. **Requite**—pay off.

141. **Unction**—ointment **Mountebank**—quack doctor.

142. **Mortal**—deadly.

143. **Cataplasm**—plaster.

144. **Simples . virtue**—medicinal herbs.

147. **Contagion**—poison. **Gall**—scratch.

149—150. **Weigh shape**—consider how time and appliances may aid us in carrying out the design.

151. **Our drift...performance**—our purpose is revealed by any defect in execution.

152. **Assay'd**—attempted.

153. **Back or second**—accessory.

154. **Blast in proof**—miscarry (just as a cannon may give way on test).

155. **Cunnings**—skill.

156. **I ha 't**—I have got the plan all right.

157. **As make.........end**—as you make the trials very strenuous so that Hamlet may get thirsty.

160. **Chalice**—cup. **For the nonce**—for the occasion.

161. **Stuck**—thrust.

162. **Our purpose...there**—our plot cannot fail.

163. **Tread upon**—follow.

166. **Aslant**—leaning across. **There.........brook**—N. B. Gertrude could have felt none of acuteness of grief when she described the drowning of Ophelia in such vivid and picturesque details.

167. **Hoar**—white.

168. **Fantastic**—women according to her fancy.

169. **Crow-flowers**—butter-cups. **Long purples**—early purple orchis, Orchia mascula.

170. **Liberal**—free-spoken. **Grosser**—more vulgar.

171. **Cold**—chaste.

172. **Pendent**—hanging.

173. **Stiver**—branch.

174. **Weedy trophies**—the garlands serving as a memorial to her on death.

175. **Weeping brook**—the brook was in sympathy with Ophelia

176. **Mermaid-like**—a mermaid was half woman and half fish.

177. **Snatches**—fragments.

178. **Incapable ..distress**–insensible of the risk of drowning

179–180. **A creature...element**—*i. e.*, a creature living in water.

181. **Heavy...drink**—laden with water.

182. **Lay**—song

183. **Muddy death**—death by sinking down to the bottom.

184. **Alas...drown'd**—grief makes Laertes tongue-tied.

188. **Trick**—habit. **Nature...holds**—nature follows its own course.

189. **When these...gone**—when tears are ended.

190. **The woman......out**—womanly weakness will be eliminated.

191. **I have...blaze**—fiery words would have escaped from me.

192. **This folly**—the shedding of tears. **Douts**—puts out; extinguishes.

**Points to be noted :**

(1) The idea of referring the matter to the 'wisest friends' seems to have been dropped. Claudius handles Laertes very tactfully.

(2) The news of Hamlet's return flabbergasts Claudius for a while. The sense of lurking danger, added to apprehended violence on the part of Laertes, makes Claudius think twice before giving Laertes any advice as to the plan of action.

(3) They have got to move circumspectly. "To cut his throat i' the church"—is Laertes's idea. Claudius cannot approve it. It is *revenge*, and not *open murder* that will meet the case. Then the king unfolds the plan, and Laertes makes his own contribution to it. Villainy competing with villainy for the destruction of Hamlet is the phase of the final catastrophe.

(4) The news of Ophelia's death is brought by the queen. H. Granville-Barker points out the purposes which it serves : (1) it gives actuality to Ophelia's death : (2) the beauty and pity

of it incidentally touch off the better element in Gertrude; (3) it draws tears from Laertes after all that planning of callous treachery.

### Act V. Scene I

**Argument** : A graveyard scene. A grave-digger and his assistants are digging a grave, which, from their conversation, appears to be for one who has taken her own life. They indulge in a series of comic and witty observations. The first grave-digger puts to his companion ludicrous question in the form of riddles, and gives himself an air of superior knowledge when he sends the other away to fetch "a stoup of liquor," and is alone singing at his work ; Ham let and Horatio stroll up there.

Hamlet seems to be shocked at the callousness of the grave-digger, singing at his grim work and throwing up the skulls of men without any feeling. This leads him to speculate on the fate of men, coming ultimately to such a state of degradation—gaping skulls and all that. He seems to find some satisfaction in studying a skull, which he supposes to be that of either an intriguer, or a flattering courtier, or a world-wise lawyer. And this is what they have come to !

He next turns to the grave-digger, and a kind of duel of wits now takes place between the two, in which the grave-digger comically enough, gets the better of Hamlet. Hamlet comes to learn that the grave is being prepared for a woman. He happens to ask the grave digger how long he has been at the job. The man's answer is exact so far as dates go, and it shows that Hamlet is now thirty years of age. The grave-digger turns up a skull now, and Hamlet learns that it is the skull of Yorick, once the king's jester ; and memories of those days come back to his mind. Yorick was so friendly with him when he was a mere child -and he remembers his rare wit. The yawning skull moves him deeply at what change has been wrought by nature and time in one whom Hamlet admired "Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Whereby your gibes now ? Your gambols ? Your songs ? Your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar ? Not one now, to mock your own grinning ? quite chapfallen ?" Then the idea that 'a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar, crops up again in his mind. And from his habit of generalization he arrives at the conclusion that the remains of Alexander might end by serving the basest purpose (stopping a beer-barrel).

The funeral procession arrives on the scene, bringing the mortal remains of Ophelia. The officiating priest refuses to accord her full Christian burial rites because of the suspicion of suicide, and Laeartes argues in vain with him. After the queen strews flowers upon the coffin, Laertes breaks out into wild denunciation of Hamlet whom he holds responsible for the death of Ophelia, and then he leaps into her grave and demands that he should be buried with her. Hamlet who has till now kept in the background with Horatio comes forward, and springs into the grave too with challenging words—and a moment later, the two are grapping at each other. They are parted by attendants.

Hamlet seems to be wrought up to a frenzy. He protests that he loved Ophelia and that forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up his sum He challenges Laertes in hyperbolic language to fantastic feats. It will seem but an outbreak of madness to the spectators. The queen begs them to be patient till the excitement is over. Hamlet soon calms down. There remains with him a sense of deep injury, for, as he says, he has always had a certain affection for Ophelia's brother. Yet he leaves the scene with a contemptuous reference to Laertes.

The king, who has remained all the time in the background, begs Laertes to be patient for he is soon bringing the matter to a pass.

## NOTES

1. **Christian burial**—burial with the full complement of burial service.

2. **Seeks her own salvation**—there is irony in 'salvation' for she has denied herself salvation by committing suicide. The grave-digger has evidently heard of the common whispers of Ophelia's death by suicide.

4. **Straight**—straightway ; without any more fussing. **Crowner**—*i. e.*, coroner. **Sat on her**—held an inquest on her. **Finds .....burial**—the verdict of the Coroner's Court is that Ophelia did not commit suicide and is, therefore, entitled to Christian burial.

6. **Unless......defence**—unless it is proved that she drowned herself for self-protection.

7. **Found**—a legal term.

9. **Se offendendo**—it should be *se defendendo*, which applies to the act of homicide in self-defence.

10. **Wittingly**—knowingly.

12. **Argal**—*i. e.*, corruption of *ergo*, which means therefore.

13. **Delver**—digger.

16. **Will he, nill he**—whether he will, or whether he will not.

21. **Crowner's quest**—coroner's inquest. N. B. Is Shakespeare ridiculing the argument in a case (*Ha les v. Petit*), arising out of the death of Sir James Hales, who drowned himself in a fit of insanity. It was argued whether Sir James was the *agent* or the *patient*, that is, whether *he went to the water or the water came to him.* It was also argued that an act consisted of three parts—(1) the imagination ; (2) the resolution to do the act ; (3) the perfection or execution of the resolution.

23. **Gentlewoman**—a woman of noble birth.

24. **Out...burial**—in unsanctified grounds (*e. g.*, a suicide was buried at cross-roads).

25. **Thou say'st**—you are right.

26. **Countenance**—encouragement ; privilege.

27. **Even Christian**—fellow Christian.

31. **The first ..arms**—Adam's spade is described as a coat of arms in some of the books on heraldry, and a gentleman bears a coat of arms, and Adam was a gentleman.

33. **Heathen**—non-Christian.

36. **Confess thyself**—he was going to complete it by saying "and he hanged," but he is interrupted.

38. **Go to**—a mild rebuke.

43. **That frame......tenants**—*i. e.*, the gallows lasts till a thousand criminals are executed.

45. **Those.. ill**—*i. e.*, criminals.

48. **To 't again**—have a try again.

50. **Unyoke**—you are let off. The metaphor of releasing a team at the end of the day's work.

54. **Cudgel your brains**—exercise your mental faculties. **Your dull ass**—the brain is compared to an ass. **Mend his face**—improve ; (of an ass) walk more quickly.

58. **Yaughan**—"Perhaps the name of an actual raven-keeper in Shakespeare's London Traces of a German 'Johan' in London have been discovered and 'Yaughan' would be the natural English way of spelling it"—*Herford*. **Stoup**—flagon ; drinking cup.

59. **In youth when**—the song is an adaptation of *The Aged Lover Renounceth Love*, printed in *Tottel's Mistellany* (1557), and attributed to Lord Vaux.

61. **Contract**—*i. e.*, contract marriage. **Behove**—advantage.

63. **No feeling......business**—no sensibility of the loathsome job he is engaged in.

65. **Property of easiness**—an acquired quality of ease and naturalness.

66. **The hand ..sense**—the hand doing little manual work, has delicate sensibility.

69. **Claw'd**—gripped.

70. **Shipped......land**—*i. e.*, shipped me into the land.

73. **Jowls**—knacks about. **Cain's jaw-bone**—Cain is said to have killed his brother, Abel, with the jaw-bone of an ass.

74. **Pate**—head. **Politician**—schemer : intriguer. **O'er-reaches**—(1) handles ; (2) gets the better of.

75. **Circumvent**—outcirt.

83. **My Lady Worm's**—now it is the property of the worm ; the worm feeds upon the head of a politician or courtier. **Chapless**—without the under-jaw.

84. **Mazzard**—head or skull.

85. **Fine revolution**—marvellous change. **An**—if. **Trick**—skill.

86 **Loggats**—game in which thick sticks are thrown to lie as near as possible to a stake fixed in the ground or a block of wood on a floor **Mine ache**—my bones ache.

93. **Quiddities**—subtleties ; quibbles. **Quilets**—verbal niceties or subtle distinctions.

95. **Sconce**—head.

96. **Action of battery**—*i. e.*,—charge of assault.

88. **Statutes**—bonds. **Recognizances** - bonds or obligations of record testifying the recogniser to owe to the recognisee a certain sum of money. **Fines......recoveries**—fine and recovery were means by which an estate tail war converted into a fee-simple, hence absolute ownership. **Double vouchers**—a voucher is a person who is called upon to warrant a tenant's title ; and double vouchers are two persons called upon to do so.

99. ***Fine* of his fines**—end of his legal tricks. **Fine pate**—his head, so prolific of legal subtleties.

102. **A pair of indentures**—agreements between mutually contracting parties written in duplicate on one sheet, the two copies being then severed by a zigzag line.

104. **Conveyances**—documents by which transfer of property is effected. **Box**—*i e*, the coffin.

105. **No more**—no more than a coffin.

108. **Parchment**—used for important legal documents.

109. **They ... calves**—they are as stupid as sheep and calves.

110. **Assurance**—(1) certainty; guarantee ; (2) conveyance of property.

111. **Sirrah**—fellow. *Sirrah* is a corruption of *sir*.

115. **Thou liest in 't**—quibble on *lie* (telling a lie).

117. **For my part**—as for myself. **Lie in't**–again a quibble.

119. **Quick**—living.

120. **Quick lie**—a lie that may shift from one to another.

129. **Absolute**—precise ; meticulous. **Knave**—fellow. **Speak by the card**—speak to the point. Reference either to the card of the mariner's compass or to a map or chart used in navigation.

130. **Ambiguity**—double meaning.

132. **Picked**—refined and subtle. **The toe...courtier**—*i.e.*, the peasant comes close enough to his lord in refinement or subtlety of speech (one may be said to tread upon the heals of the other). **Kibe**—chilblain.

142 **If he do......there**—if he does not recover his sanity in England, it does not make any difference (for the men in England are equally mad). The madness of Englishmen was a standing joke on the Elizabethan stage. Compare : "Your lordship shall ever find......amongst a hundred Englishmen four score and ten mad men."—Marston, *Malcontent*.

150. **Upon what ground**—Hamlet means—*for what* reason ? The grave-digger takes the literal sense of *ground*.

151. **Thirty years**—N. B. Hamlet's age is calculated to be thirty. It is fixed by the grave-digger's service and by the number of years since Yorick's death. From Laertes's talk to Ophelia we infer that Hamlet is younger, which is confirmed also by his mother's references to him. "In Q. I. Hamlet's age is not fixed, and he seems younger throughout. Perhaps in recasting the play Shakespeare felt that Hamlet's weight of thought implied an age beyond that of very early manhood and failed to harmonise the earlier and later presentations of his hero." (*Dowden*).

154. **Scarce......in**—*i. e.*, crumble when being laid in the grave.

159. **Water......body**—water sets up the decomposition of a dead body more quickly than anything else.

170. **Rhenish**—Rhine wine.

171. **Yorick**—some say that Yorick stands for Danish Jorg (George) ; others say that it represents *Roric*, for Roricus, the name in *Saxo-Grammaticus* of Hamlet's maternal grandfather ; others say that it is for Scandinavian *Eric*.

175. **A fellow......jest**—a person of inexhaustible wit.

176. **Of......fancy**—*fancy* refers to his ready wit, quick repartee.

177. **My gorge......it**—I feel extreme loathing. **Gorge**—literally, throat, swallow ; here stomach.

178. **Gibes**—scoffs. **Gambols**—pranks. **Flashes of merriment**—brilliant criticisms.

179. **Set......roar**—make the company laugh loudly.

180. **Grinning**—gaping. **Chapfallen**—with the lower jaw hanging down.

184. **Favour**—appearance ; also beauty (ironically).

187. **O' this fashion**—in this manner. **I' the earth**—when he had been reduced to earth.

189. **And smelt so**—had a foul smell like this ? **Pah**—a cry of loathing

194. **Bung-hole**—*bung* is the stopper of a hole in a barrel ; so hole in a barrel for a stopper.

195. **Curiously**—fancifully.

197. **Modesty**—moderation.

200. **Loam**—soil composed of decayed vegetable or other organic matter, clay and sand.

202. **Imperious**—imperial.

203. **That earth . awe**—*i. e.*, Caesar while alive inspired fear and reverence in all people. And Caesar was nothing but dust, and returned to dust after death.

205. **Flaw**—gust of wind.

207. **Who......follow**—whose dead body is carried in a funeral procession ?

208. **Maimed rites**—defective burial rites. **Betoken**—indicate.

209. **Corse**—corpse. **With desperate hand**—by violent means.

210. **Ford...life**—destroy itself. **Of some estate**—of noble rank.

211. **Couch we**—let us keep in hiding.

212. **What ceremony else**—Laerstes demands whether anything more than the 'maimed rites' is to be accorded.

215. **Obsequies**—funeral rites. **Enlarged**—augmented.

216. **Warranty**—surety. **Her death .....doubtful**—her death was subject to suspicion.

217. **Great command**—command of the king. **O'ersways**—overrules. **The order**—*i.e.*, the authority of the Church.

218. **Ground unsanctified**—for example, at cross-roads where one who has committed suicide is buried under a heap of stones, with a stake driven in.

219. **Last trumpet**—the trumpet announcing the Judgment Day. **For**—instead of. **Charitable prayers**—hymns and masses for the peace of the departed soul.

220. **Shards**—potsherds.

221. **Virgin crants**——garlands made of white paper and hung up in the Church on the occasion of a young girl's funeral.

222. **Maiden strewments**—strewing of flowers on the bier and grave of a maiden. **Bringing home......burial**—two ideas of the bringing home of a bride and laying to rest in the grave with the passing bell. "The marriage-rites in the case of maidens are sadly parodied in the funeral rites."

225. **Profane**—desecrate.

226. **Requiem**—Mass for the repose of the soul of the dead. **Rest**—requiem means rest.

227. **Peace-parted souls**—those who die in peace and by a natural cause.

229. **Churlish**—rude.

230. **Ministering angel**—an angel comforting the damned soul.

231. **Howling**—shrieking in torments that you suffer in hell.

233. **Sweet...sweet**—the queen showers flowers on Opheila and says that she is as sweet and innocent as flowers.

236. **Cursed head**—*i. e.*, Hamlet.

237. **Ingenius**—intelligent.

242. **Pelion**—a lofty range of mountains in Thessaly. The Titans (giants) in their war with the gods are said to have attempted to scale heaven hy heaping Ossa and Olympus on Pelion, or Pelion and Ossa on Olympus. **Skyish**—towering to the sky. **Olympus**—the range of mountains separating Macedonia and Thessaly. It was abode of the Greek gods, headed by Zeus.

245. **Bears.........emphasis**—express itself in such strong accents.

246. **Conjures**—casts a spell upon.

250. **Thou ..well**—Hamlet has no unfriendly feeling for Laertes, and wonders why Laertes should curse him.

251. **Spenitive**—easily moved to anger. Spleen was supposed to be the seat of anger.

252. **Something......dangerous**—a hint that he is subject to a violent frenzy.

253. **Pluck..... as under**—part them.

256. **Upon this theme**—on the subject of Ophelia.

257. **Wag**—move.

261. **Make up my sum**—reach the sum total of my love for Ophelia.

263. **Forbear him**—do not provoke him ; let him alone.

265. **Woo 't**—wilt thou or wouldest thou.

266. **Eisel**—vinegar. "Hamlet challenges Laertes to perform any feat disagreeable or repulsive to show his sorrow, and probably there is here an allusion to the extravagant feats which the gallants of Elizbethan times performed as proofs of their love for their mistreses. Such feats included the drinking of nauseous potions, even of the gallant's own blood." Another explanation is that *Eisel* stands for a river—the Yssel, or the Vistula, or some unknown Danish river. **Eat a crocodile**—might refer to crocodile tears, and so the trick of hypocrisy. There might be a hint of Laertes making a show of his grief—a game in which Hamlet can also beat him.

267. **Whine**—utter a plaintive, long-drawn nasal cry ; and to show distress by such a cry.

268. **Outface**—put out of countenance.

272. **Singeing**—burning. **Burning zone**—the belt between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.

273. **Wart**—a small, usually hard, elevation on the skin, due to an excessive growth of the papillae. **Mouth**—bluster.

275. **Thou awhile......him**—he will be a prey to the frenzy for a while.

277. **Her golden couplets**—alludes to the fact that a pigeon lays two eggs at a time, and that the young appear covered with a golden down when they are hatched.

278. **His silence......drooping**—*i. e.*, he will be wrapt up in a sullen silence. **Hear you, sir**—Hamlet addresses Laertes.

280. **It is no matter**—I leave it alone.

281—282. **Let Hercules...day**-has been variously explained. Dowden explain-Laertes must have his whine and his bark...

if Hercules cannot silence dogs, much less I, who am little like that hero. Dover Wilson supports this meaning—Hercules is reputed to have disliked dogs and flies, which were not allowed within his temple at Rome. Verity's explanation may also be considered. Bluster away, my young Hercules: but poor Hamlet's turn will come.

**Dog day**—a proverbial saying.

284. **Strength...speech**—let not patience fail you when you remember our last night's talk.

285. **Present push**—instant trial. There is also the idea of the rapier-thrust (poisoned) that will finish Hamlet.

287. **A living monument**—a long enduring monument; also a hint that the death of the living Hamlet will supply a monument for the grave.

288. **An hour of quiet**—*i. e*, the ending of all trouble by the death of Hamlet.

289 **In patience...be**—let us move patiently and cautiously.

**Points to be noted:**

(1) A tragic irony runs through the graveyard scene despite its comic exaggeration. Hamlet knows nothing of Ophelia's madness, nor of her death. Nor has Horatio had an opportunity to tell him anything. He is witnessing the grave being dug for Ophelia, and cuts heartless jokes with the grave-digger. "Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-digging?" But he seems to enter into the grave-digger's spirit of heartless levity. "Even as Gertrude was spared by a hair's breadth the knowledge—though at last she will learn—that her lover and husband is her husband's murderer, so Hamlet is here brought to the very edge of discovering that this grave over which he so serenely chops logic is Ophelia's." (*H. Granville Barker.*)

(2) Hamlet has returned to wreak prompt and stern vengeance upon the king after the plot to murder him. Yet here he is detached and impersonal, and one may think that the thought of revenge has receded back from his mind. He seems to be toying with idle fancies when the moment for the grim task is approaching. It is a psychological necessity—a way of relieving the tension of mind.

(3) Laertes's exaggerated outburst is the acid test for Hamlet.

I lov'd Ophelia; forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,

Make up my sum............

Here he is speaking the sober truth. Then he breaks into a hyperbolic speech outmatching Laertes. Hamlet is not mad, but he keeps the pose on, and it is to reveal and re-echo the hollow ring of Laertes's cry of grief. Hamlet loved Ophelia ; Hamlet has killed Ophelia. So H. Granville-Barker writes, "In that terrible paradox is the essence of their tragedy to which this dullard (Laertes), glutted with his own grief, is blind."

(4) There is again tragic irony in the king's confidence :

"Well put the matter to the present push".

The *push* is the poisoned rapier thrust which will end Hamlet's life, the king never dreaming that he will die by the some rapier-thrust.

## Scene II

**Argument** : Hamlet now explains to Horatio the reason for his unexpected return. His suspicion leads him to discover the king's treacherous commission importing his death ; he alters the document, substituting the names of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for his own ; then comes the encounter with the pirates leading to his own capture and final return to Denmark. Horatio feels some compunction about the fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but Hamlet sends them to their doom because they acted as the tools of the king—and he can have little scruples on this score. Horatio warns him that it is necessary for him to carry out his intention without any further delay for the news of the execution of the two will soon arrive from England. Hamlet tells him that he has already made up his mind, but adds a few words of regret, in passing, at his own impassioned conduct towards Laertes at Ophelia's grave. It is to be noted here that Hamlet, with his usual acumen, should have failed to have any suspicion of the king's second—and a more diabolical plot against his life, in which Laertes, now his deadly enemy, is a collaborator.

A messenger now arrives from the king to acquint Hamlet with the particulars of the fencing match. It is the young effiminate courtier, Osric. The exaggerated courtesy of this young dandy, his affectation and stilted phrases call forth Hamlets biting satire and mimicry. He keeps nagging at Osric, and makes him repent certain foolish remarks in a way reminiscent of Polonius—and at last permits him to deliver the messages. Neither the match, nor the princely gift in case of his winning,

offered by the king as a mark of his affection for his step son, arouses any misgivings in Hamlet. Yet he seems to be hunted by some vague foreboding. There is a fatalistic ring in his words. He seems to be ready to meet whatever may come with stoical apathy.

In a tranquil mood he comes to the fencing match. He even akesr care to make some friendly gesture to Laertes–in response to his mother's desire. He frankly explains what has happened. There is no trace of habitual irony in what he says. There is one thing he can do to exonerate his own behaviour ; it is to confess that he is sometimes at odds with himself. The death of Polonius he compares to an accident that might happen if a man were to shoot an arrow over the roof and so hurt his brother. This admission does not alter the malicious purpose of Laertes. Laertes makes a show of accepting the reconciliation, but hints that he binds himself to nothing. The king outdoes himself in false and exaggerated cordiality, affecting to take the warmest personal interest in Hamlet's triumph by offering valuable rewards and arranging for the shooting off of ordnance. But chance plays the murderer a double trick Hamlet does not, as expected after the first round of fencing, take from the king's own hand the goblet in which he has poured a deadly poison, but, impatient as usual, begins the second round. The queen, anxious for her heated, overtired and sweating son, offers to wipe the moisture from his brow, and, to hearten him, proceeds to drink his health in the poisoned goblet. The warning cry of her horrified husband comes too late.

In the meantime, Hamlet and Laertes plunge into a serious contest. Laertes, a better fencer than Hamlet, has been playing with him for some time, he now pushes and thrusts in deadly earnest, and wounds Hamlet with the poisoned foil. In the scuffle Hamlet disarms Laertes and picking up his opponent's foil, wounds him in turn. At the same moment, the queen collapses. Even now the king tries to save the situation by a lie, but the dying queen cries out to Hamlet that she is poisoned. Hamlet immediately takes the situation in hand. Laertes, knowing that his moments are numbered, tells Hamlet the whole terrible truth. He points to the king as the instigator of all this treachery. Hamlet now turns his weapon on the king. The king still unyielding calls out for help, and Hamlet, flinging his villainy in his face, forces him to drink the contents of his own poisoned cup. The dying Laertes sees in the death of this man, who has used him as

his tool, only an act of justice, as he pays his last tribute to Hamlet's noble nature.

Hamlet addresses his dying words to Horatio ; he begs him to "draw his breath in pain" in this harsh world for a while to tell his story to the world. When Hamlet hears of the coming of Fortinbras, he declares with dying voice Fortinbras's election to the throne of Denmark. Ambassadors from England also arrive at this moment, and bring the news of the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Horatio is permitted by Fortinbras (the new king) to make public the whole sad story. Hamlet is accorded the highest military honours for his burial.

## NOTES

1. **So much......this**—they have been talking before they enter the stage, and we do not know what it refers to—it might be the beginning of the tale of his adventure at sea. **Now ...... the other**—now you shall hear the rest.

2. **Circumstance**—detail.

4. **In my heart...fighting**—there was a struggle going on in my heart.

6, **Mutines**—mutineers. **Bilboes**—fetters. The bilboes consisted of a long iron bar, fitted with sliding shackles to confine the ankles and a lock by which one end of bar was fastened to the round or floor. The bilboes were used on board ship to punish mutinous sailors.

8—9. **Our indiscretion...pall**—we may sometimes gain by acting rashly, while our deep-laid plans or deliberations may fail. **Pall**—fail. **Learn**- teach.

10—11. **There's a divinity...will**—the ends we pursue are not within our control, but depend on some divine power. **Rough-hew**—shape roughly. We can but work perfunctorily at our ends or purposes (like bad workmen), but what final shape they will have is given by a power beyond our control.

13. **Sea-gown**—"a coarse, high-collared, and short-sleeved gown, reaching down to the mid-leg, and used most by sea-men and sailors." (*Cotgrave*). **Scarf'd**—thrown about like a scarf.

15. **Finger'd**—pilfered ; filched.

16. **Making so bold**—venturing so far as.

17. **My fears...manner**—my fears for my safety making me forget good manners or propriety.

18. **Their grand commission**—their grand commission (ironical) demanded nothing less than the death of Hamlet.

19. **Exact**—peremptory.

20. **Larded**—garnished. **Several**—separate.

21. **Importing**—relating to.

22. **Suchbugs.....life**—such perils to follow if I were allowed to live. Johnson explains the words as crimes with which Hamlet was charged (so that he should not be spared to live.)

23. **Supervise**—first hasty reading, **No leisure bated**—without any respite

24. **Not.....axe**—*i. e.*, no time allowed for the sharpening of the axe.

29. **Be-netted .....villainies** - caught in the meshes of wicked plots.

30. **Ere I could......brains**—before I could set my brains working as to what should be done.

31. **They......play**—the play had started before the prologue was spoken. The prologue comes before the play; here the play began before the prologue (*i. e*, the plan was ready before the brains could think it out)

33. **Statists**—sttatemen.

34. **A baseness .....fair**—good writing was then considered a mark of vulgarity.

36. **Yeoman's service**—service as a yeoman rendered to his superior. A yeoman was one among the usual attendants of a lord or kings; his position was below that of a squire, and he rendered certain humble but necessary services. **It did...... service**—it stood me in good stead.

37. **Effect**—drift

40. **Like .. flourish**—palm is the symbol of victory, and it refers to the triumph of love or friendly relations between Denmark and England.

41. **As peace..... wear**—wheaten garland as symbolical of prosperity going with peace.

42. **Comma**—explained as a phrase or group of words forming a short member of a sentence or period; so a connecting link.

43. **As'es**—a play on *as* and *ass*, as pointed by the word *charge* following; so *charge* will mean (1) importance; (2) load.

46. **Debatement**—consideration.

46. **Shriving-time**—time allowed for confessing sin and obtaining pardon.

48. **Ordinant**—controlling.

5 . **Model**—copy.

52. **Subscribed**—signed. **Impression**—stamp of the seal.

53. **Changeling**—substitute.
54. **Sequent**—following ; succeeding.
56. **Go to 't**—*i. e.*, go to their death.
57. **They......employment**—the courted their own fate.
58. **They......conscience**—they do not touch my conscience. **Defeat**...destruction.

59. **Insinuation**—poking their nose into the affairs of other people.

60. **Baser nature**—*i. e.*, men of baser character.

61. **Pass**—thrust. **Fell**—cruel. **Incensed**—angry. **Points**—points of the sword.

62. **Opposites**—opponents.

63. **What...this**—Claudius is a disgrace to the name of a king. **Does it......upon**—is it not incumbent upon me ?

65. **Popp'd...hopes**—kept me from the throne by getting himself elected.

66. **Proper**—own.

67. **Cozenage**—deceit (in shipping him off to England to be killed) **Is 't......conscience**—is it not consistent with a clear conscience ?

68. **Quit**—requite.
79. **Canker**—ulcer.

71—72. **It must......there**—the king will soon come to know what has happened to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Horatio warns Hamlet that he must act quickly.

73. **It...short**—does he mean that the king will come to know it shortly ? Or does he mean that he will allow but little time to the king ? **Interim**—interval.

74. **And a man's life...one**—*i. e.*, it does not take long to kill a man.

76. **I forgot myself**—I misbehaved.

77—78. **By the image . his**—he stands in the same boat as myself—he has a father to revenge. **Court his favours**—seek to win his good will.

79. **The bravery of his grief**—the fine show that he made of his grief. **Put...passion**—enraged me beyond measure.

82. **Water-fly**—fly that hovers over water, and so a vain or busily ideal person.

85. **Thy gracious**—you have a better chance of saving your soul, **Let a beast**-let a bruish or half-intelligent fellow. **Be lord**

**of beasts**—be owner of cattle and property. **His crib mess**—he will have an honoured place at the king's table.

87. **Chough**—jackdaw; and to a chatter-box.

89. **Spacious...dirt**—rich in possession of land. Hamlet looks upon landed property as so much dirt.

93. **Put head**—Osric is standing with his hat off (to show respect to Hamlet), and Hamlet begs him to put it on.

95. **For my complexion**—for my temperament. The *Quarto* reading is *or my complexion*: so or my complexion deceives me.

96. **It...indeed**—Osric at once agrees with Hamlet. He says yes to whatever Hamlet says, however absurd or incredible.

97. **Exceedingly my lord**—shamelessly. Osric agrees with all that Hamlet says. He is just a toady and sycophant.

101. **Remember**—Hamlet wants Osric to put on his hat.

102. **For mine ease**—a formal reply when a man holds his hat in his hand. It implies that he is quite comfortable with his hat off (no risk of catching cold).

104. **Absolute**—perfect. **Excellent differences**—accomplishments that mark him out from others.

105. **Of very......showing**—refined to manners and distinguished in bearing.

106. **Feelingly**—with due justice. **Card or calendar of gentry**—the ideal of good breeding. *Card* is one on which the 32 points are marked in the mariner's compass; then figuratively guide or directory; *calendar* also gives the same idea.

107. **Continent**—summary. **You shall find .....see**—"You shall find in him containing and comprising every quality which a gentleman would desire to contemplate for imitation"—*Johnson*. N. B. Osric is a caricature of an Elizabethan courtier.

109. **Definement**—description. Hamlet adopts Osric's stilted style. **Perdition**—diminution.

110—111. **To divide...soil**—to draw up a list of his qualities would cause the memory to stagger, and in any case such a list cannot really cope with his qualities so quickly do they pour into the mind. **Yaw**—(of a ship) more unsteadily. "To enumerate in detail the perfections of Laertes would bewilder the computations of memory, yet for all that—in spite of the calculation—the enumeration would stagger to and fro (and so fall behind) in comparison with Laertes' quick sailing (or, possibly considering *its* quick soil, which ought to steady the ship)"—*Dowden*.

112. **In......extolment**—to set forth bis praises truly.

113—114. **A soul......article**—a soul that carries a high price. **His infusion......rareness**—the rare and unique qualities with which he is endowed.

115. **To make......him**—to report him truly. **Semblable**—likeness. **To make......mirror**—his mirror alone can reflect his true features.

116. **Who......him**—anyone else who would draw his figure, would draw but his shadow. Hamlet means that no one can do full justice to the qualities and accomplishments of Laertes by trying to enumerate them. **Umbrage**—shadow.

117. **Infallibly**—without a mistake.

118. **Concernancy**—Hamlet wants to know what his object may be in speaking of Laertes.

119. **In......breath**—*i.e.*, in words that do injustice to him.

121. **Is 't not......tongue**—how is it that you do not understand your own affected languages spoken by another ?

123. **What imports......gentleman**—what do you mean by naming this gentleman ?

125. **His purse......already**—he has run through all his wealth of words.

130. **Approve**—commend.

132. **I dare...that**—I cannot certainly admit that I am not ignorant or that I know of the excellences that Laertes possesses. **Lest......excellence**—so that I should not vie with in respect of his excellences.

133. **To know a man......himself**—a man must know himself well before he can know another.

135. **For his weapon**—in the use of the rapier. **Imputation**—repute.

136. **In his meed**—in his particular excellence. **Unfellowed**—without an equal

141. **Imponed**—staked.

142. **Assigns**—appurtenances.

143. **Hangers**—straps on sword-belts from which swords hang. **Carriages**—carriage is Osric's pompous word for hanger.

144. **Very......fancy**—so pleasing in design. **Responsive**—corresponding.

145. **Liberal conceit**—elaborate design

147. **Edified**—instructed. **Margent**—explanatory notes on the margin. **I knew done**—Horatio means that it needs to be explained by Osric's comments.

149. **Germane to the matter**—related to the point.

150. **If we...sides**—*i. e.*, carriages would suit better cannon than the rapier.

151. **I would...then**—I wish you would say hangers in relation to rapiers. **On**—proceed.

156—157. **In a dozen passes . hits**—Laertes is a better fencer, and so he can win by twelve hits against Hamlet's nine; if Hamlet scores nine hits before Laertes has made twelve; Hamlet wins; if Hamlet falls short of nine, while Laertes makes twelve hits Laertes wins.

159. **Vouchsafe the answer**—meet the challenge.

161. **The opposition ..trial**—*i. e.*, personal encounter in the contest.

164. **Breathing time**—the time for exercise (in the interval of employment).

167. **Gain nothing...hits**—*i. e.*, earn demerit and a few extra hits.

168. **Redeliver you**—repeat your message.

169. **To this effect**—as I mean. **Flourish**—decoration.

170. **I commend...lordship**—I ask at your service (a formal leave-taking).

171—172. **Yours, yours,**—I am at your service. **He does well...turn**—Osric says, "I commend my duty to your lordship," and takes leave of Hamlet with a bow. Hamlet means here Osric's way of bowing and scraping, which none but Osric will praise. There was nothing graceful about Osric's formal leave-taking.

174. **Lapwing**—peewit; always with allusion to its habits, *e.g.*, its williness in drawing away a visitor from its nest, its supposed habit of running about when newly hatched with its head in the shell. Horatio might be ridiculing Osric's attempts to ape court manners and the fashionable way of speaking. A newly hatched lapwing runs about with its head in the shell; so Horatio might also refer to Osric putting on his hat again and departing.

175. **Comply**—use ceremony. **He did...it**—as a baby Osric must have practised ceremony—for example, before sucking his mother's breast.

176. **Bevy**—a flock of birds.

177. **Drossy**—frivolous. **Got ..encounter**—*i e.*, affected the speech and polish of manner. **Yesty collection**—froth accumulation of useless knowledge.

180. **Carries...through**—enables them to get on all right with. **Fond and winnowed**—foolish and overrefined. "Tne metaphor is a mixed one...Osric, and others like him, are compared to the chaff which mounts higher than the sifted wheat, and to the bubbles, which rise to the surface through the deeper water." **Blow...trial**—bring them to a test. **The bubbles...out**—their superficiality of knowledge or ignorance is exposed.

183. **Attend**—await.

186. **Constant...purposes**—a double meaning intended. He is not going to change his mind with regard to the fencing, and, secondly, he will stick to his purpose of executing his revenge. **Follow**—depend on.

187. **If his fitness...ready**—if the king finds the time convenient, it suits me.

190. **In happy time**—that's all right. The phrase expresses Hamlet's agreement.

191. **Gentle entertainment**—courtesy.

192. **She...me**—she gives me good advice.

195. **Win at the odds**—*i.e.*, with the advantage given me. Hamlet wins if he scores nine hits before Laertes can make twelve hits.

196. **How ill...heart**—how sorely charged my heart is. Hamlet refers to the settled despondency and apathy in his mind—his heart-sickness as well as the perplexity attending all his action.

**It...matter**–it may either express his apathy as to what may happen, or his concentration on revenge despite all that happens.

200. **It...foolery**—Hamlet ridicules his premonition—the haunting sense of an unknown catastrophe. **Gain-giving**—misgiving.

201. **As would.... woman**–such misgivings may suit a woman but with his mind always ration lizing and objectively analys ing. Hamlet would dismiss them from his mind.

202. **If your mind...it**—you should obey the prompting within your mind. Horatio means that if Hamlet has misgivings about the fencing match, it should better be suspended.

2(3. **Forestall...bitter**—go and meet the king and his courtiers before they come here, and request that the fencing match be suspended.

204. **Defy augury**—pay no heed to premonition.

305. **There's a special providence...sparrow**-compare: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farth ng ? and one of them

shall not fall on the ground without your father.'—*Matthew* x 29. All that happens is directed by powers above. It may be an expression of fatalistic belief. Or it may be that Hamlet believes in the divine order of things but is sceptical of his own powers in dealing with the peculiar and complex circumstances of his own life, in reference to the task imposed upon him.

206—207. **If it...come**—what is to happen now, cannot be put back. **If it...come**—is he thinking of revenge, which, if not accomplished immediately, must be accomplished in future ? **The readiness all**—N. B. Perhaps it is from Montaigne. True to his objective and generalizing mind, Hamlet takes the right stand after all. Whatever may happen—whether now or in future—he must ever hold himself ready. This refers also to his taking of revenge, for which he must always be ready whatever the intervening circumstances. **Since...betimes**—there is his premonition again. The taking of revenge may cost his life. But he seems to have least regret for parting with life. Death will happen some time. And it does not matter if he dies early. He will take nothing of this life with him to the next world. So, why yearn for this life ?

210. **Take...me**—the king joins the hands of Hamlet and Laertes.

213. **This presence**—all who are present here.

214. **How I am punished**—Johnson says that Hamlet shelters himself in a falsehood. But is not a fact that Hamlet is sorely distracted in mind ? The "antic-disposition" he puts on seems to be a disguise for what almost verges on madness. Can he tell Horatio that he killed his father in mistake for the king and that he was in the act of spying at the moment ?

216. **Your nature**—Hamlet means Laertes's passionate nature. **Exception**—objection.

217. **Roughly awake**—*i. e.*, provoke.

219. **If Hamlet...away**—if Hamlet is not his own self.

223. **Hamlet...wrong'd**—Hamlet is the party that suffers wrong. **Faction**—party.

225. **In . audience**—in the presence of all who are assembled here.

226. **Disclaiming...evil**—disowning of a deliberate purpose to wrong you.

529. **I am satisfied in nature**—Laertes replies point by point ; Hamlet referred to "nature", "honour", "exception."

Nature means human nature or personal disposition, but Dover Wilson explains it as *filial duty*.

230. **Motive**—incentive.

231. **In...honour**—in the matter of honour. His honour demands that he should revenge his father (just as it is true of Hamlet). Personally, he is satisfied with Hamlet's apologies, but his honour remains to be vindicated.

232. **Stand aloof**—reserve myself. **Will...reconcilement**—refuse to come to terms with you.

234. **A voice...peace**—opinion, supported by parallel cases in the past, in favour of reconcilement.

235. **Ungored**—unwounded ; unstained.

236. **I do...love**—I esteem the friendship you proffer me.

237. **Will...it**—Laertes is going to return Hamlet's proffered friendship with the poisoned point of a rapier.

238. **Embrace it freely**—Hamlet refers to Laertes's proposal to submit the question to "some elder masters".

239. **Frankly**—*i. e.*, with the purest of motives (innocently).

240. **I 'll foil**—I shall set you off (my indifferent skill in fencing will redound to your glory. Hamlet plays on the sense of *foil*—a thin leaf of gold or silver in which a gem is set so that its brilliance may be shown off.

242. **Stick...off**—shine very brilliantly.

246. **Your grace...side**—Hamlet has been given some initial advantage, for he wins by scoring nine hits, and Laertes by twelve hits.

248. **Is better'd**—has improved.

249. **This...heavy**—the foils are handed to Laertes, while Hamlet is kept engaged by the king's conversation and Laertes manages to pick up an unbated sword, unnoticed by Hamlet.

250. **Likes**—pleases. **A length**—*i. e.*, some length.

254. **Quit...exchange**—repay Laertes in the third bout any hit received in the first or second.

256. **Drink...better breath**—*i. e.*, wishing him greater staying power.

257. **Union**—a pearl.

260. **Kettle**—kettle-drum.

264. **Wary**—watchful.

265. **One**—*i. e.*, one hit. Hamlet claims one hit, and Laertes denies it.

266. **Judgment**—Hamlet calls for the verdict of the judges.

267. **This pearl ..thine**—instead of putting a pearl in the cup, the king pours in poison.

268. **Give ..cup**—the king wants Hamlet to drink the poisoned cup, but Hamlet lays it aside, and desires to play another bout first.

271. **A touch, a touch**—Hamlet hits again, but Laertes says that it is short of a hit—no more than a touch.

272. **His fat**—"There is a tradition that this line was appropriate to Richard Barbage, who first acted the character of Hamlet."—*Clarendon Press*. Dover Wilson writes, "I have little doubt that 'fat' simply means 'sweatly, an interrelation which suits the double use of the handkerchief...and Hamlet's reluctance to drink ..Another suggestion is 'out of condition...' which fits in with 'scent of breath' and 'forgone all custom of exercises'...

273. **Napkin**—handkerchief.

274. **Carouses**—drinks.

281. **And yet...conscience**—at the last moment Laertes's conscience awakes, but it does not deter him from carrying out the diabolical plot

282. **You but dally**—you are not fencing seriously.

283. **Pass**—make your thrust. **With...violence**—with all the force you command.

284. **You make me**—you do not take me seriously, but treat me as an effeminate person.

285. **Nothing ..way**—it is no hit on either side The third bout is a draw.

286. **Have...now**—I shall attack you N B. It is at the end of the bout that Laertes plunges at Hamlet with the poisoned rapier. Hamlet seems to have been taken by surprise. So a scuffle follows, and they exchange rapiers ; and Laertes too, is wounded by his own poisoned rapier in Hamlet's possession.

289. **They...sides**—Horatio notices that both are bleeding. So there must have been a foul play. They should have been playing with bated weapons.

291. **As a woodcock...springe**—a woodcock is proverbially a foolish bird, and sometimes gets caught in the trap laid for other birds. Horatio means that he has been caught in his own trap (his poisoned rapier has plunged into him.)

293. **She swoons...bleed**—the queen falls a victim to the poison. The king is equal to the occasion, and gives a plausible explanation, namely, that she has swooned at the sight of blood.

The queen becomes his Nemesis now, she cries out that she is poisoned. Her cry brings on the catastrophe.

297. **O villainy...lock'd**—Hamlet at once takes the control of the situation in hand. His moment which he has been expecting always, now comes.

298. **Treachery**—Hamlet suspects some foul play when the queen gets poisoned, and it does not take him long to realize that he might have as well fallen a victim to the poison.

299. **It is here, Hamlet**—Laertes's conscience awakes when he is dying. Used as a tool by the king, he now denounces the king. Laertes finally helps Hamlet in bringing justice upon the head of Claudius.

302—303. **Unbated**—without the botton usually fixed to the end of a foil. **The foul practice.. me**—he confesses that he has fallen a victim to his own treachery. Retribution comes upon Laertes for his crime. The queen may seem to be an innocent victim. The queen and Laertes fall by the treacherous plot of the king. They denounce the king for his crime—and here is the necessary justification (so long delayed) for the action of Hamlet.

> Our wills and fates do so contrary run,
> That our devices still are overthrown ;
> Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.

Hamlet's revenge takes place, as ordered in the scheme of things, over which, however, he has little control.

308. **Then, venom...work**—the poisoned rapier is turned upon the king.

309. **O, yet defend.. hurt**—N. B. Seasoned in his sin, the king dies. Even in his last moment, he is bent on mischief, and charges Hamlet with treason and calls upon the people to defend him. There is no sign of repentance in him ; there is no confession. Hamlet spared him when he was at prayer. He dies "with all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May."

311. **Drink potion**—Hamlet makes the king drink the poison too, that he prepared for Hamlet. **Is...here**—it is the union (pearl) that the king promised Hamlet—the gift returns to the owner. There is a quibble too—it consummates the union of the king and queen in death. The murder of Hamlet's father effected their earthly union ; their union in death is effected by the king's plot to murder the son.

312. **He...served**—Laertes has demanded justice in the matter

of his father's death, and satisfaction of his honour. In the king's service, Polonius perished—a party to the plot against Hamlet. Perhaps now Laertes realizes that the blame for the father's death must be on the king, though he is not acquainted with the circumstances of the death.

313. **Temper'd**—mixed.

314. **Exchange forgiveness**—let us forgive each other.

315. **Mine...thee**—I do not hold you responsible for my death, nor for my father's. Has Laertes now a dawning consciousness that the king is ultimately responsible for the death of his father? He could not have fathomed the complicated court-intrigue, directed against Hamlet since his coming from Wittenberg, the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father and the charge laid upon Hamlet.

316. **Heaven......it**—heaven forgive you for your crime against me!

318. **Wretched queen**—Hamlet addresses her as *wretched queen.* There is but pity, mixed with contempt, in his attiude towards his mother for linking her fate with Claudius. He can not forgive her for playing false with his father.

319. **Chance**—mischance. **You...tremble**—Hamlet addresses the spectators.

320. **Mutes**—silent spectators taking no part in the action.

321. **Sergeant**—in Shakespeare, a sheriff's officer.

322. **Is strict...arrest**—Hamlet means that he is in the grip of death.

324. **Let it be**—let it alone.

325. **Report...aright**—Hamlet's solid indifference is now gone. "The readiness is all: since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes?" He may have little regret parting with his life, but his overscrupulousness, his poignant sense of justice which may explain the delay in the performance of his task, trouble him even in his last moment. He wants his fair name to be vindicated. And he appeals to Horatio. **Unsatisfied**—those who are still unconvinced of the righteousness of his cause.

326. **An antique Roman**—the ancient Romans committed suicide rather than have their honour stained or suffer disgrace. Shakespeare had lately finished *Julius Caesar*, and might have in mind the deaths of Brutus and Cassius.

329. **Wounded name**—his fair name besmirched (for example, he may be blamed for the murder of the king, while people, know nothing of the king's murder of his father and diabolical plot against him.)

330. **Things...unknown**—people remaining ignorant of all circumstances, leading to the catastrophe.

332. **Felicity** – happiness of dying. Death is a welcome relief to Hamlet, and he describes death as *felicity*, and death is a felicity, for he gives reasons in his soliloquy—'To be, not to be."

337. **Warlike volley**—greeting by discharge of guns.

338. **O'ercrows**—triumphs over.

340. **The election lights**—*i. e.*, Fortinbras is due to be elected to the throne of Denmark.

341. **He has.. voice**—Hamlet is dying, but he is now the King of Denmark, and declares Fortinbras to be his successor.

342. **Occurrents**-events. **More andl ess** -greet and small.

343. **Solicited**—prompted me to these actions. **The rest is silence**—the silence of the grave covers everything else ; everything else is buried in the grave. The pathos of the last few words is most eloquent.

345. **Flights...rest**—angels in a body may bless him with repose after his troubled, distracted life on earth ! It is a wish that comes very appropriately from Horatio who knows all that Hamlet has suffered.

348. **Cease your search** – here is the woeful sight you are looking for.

349. **Quarry**—heap made of the deer killed at a hunt ; here the heap of the dead. **Havoc**—to cry havoc is to give an army the order 'havoc !' as the signal for pillaging. **Cries on havoc**—calls for merciless slaughter. Dover Wilson, however, says that there is no suggestion of vengeance, as many have supposed.

350. **Toward**—ready to begin. **Eternal**—perhaps in the sense of *infernal*. **Eternal cell**—grave.

351. **At a shot**—at a single stroke.

354. **The ears...senseless**—Claudius is meant.

358. **Had it...you**—Claudius would not have thanked you for the news of execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

360. **Jump**—just ; exactly. **Question**—subject-matter.

364. **Unknowing world**—ignorant people.

361—368. **Of carnal...cause**—the events referred to are (1) the murder of Hamlet's father by Claudius followed by the

incestuous marriage of Claudius and Hamlet's mother ; (2) the accidental death of Ophelia ; (3) the slaying of Polonius ; (4) the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. **Put on**—instigated. **By cunning......cause**—refers to Hamlet substitution of letters of commission, which was forced upon him to save his own life.

369. **Upshot**—final result. **Purposes mistook**—the treacherous plot of the king recoiling on him.

370. **Inventors' heads**—Claudius and Laertes both concocted the plot against Hamlet's life, and it recoiled on them too.

373. **Embrace my fortune**—accept my election as King of Denmark.

374. **Rights of memory**—rights not forgotten by people.

375. **Vantage**—advantage ; opportunity.

377. **His mouths**—Hamlet's mouth. **Draw on more**—get others to support it.

378. **This same**—the obligation to Hamlet (explaining the circumstances that will clear his name of any blame). **Presently**—on the spot.

379. **Wild**—confused. **Mischance**—accident ; unpleasant incident.

380. **On plots and errors**—resulting from plots and errors (ofr which Claudius and Laertes were responsible).

382. **Put on**—put to the test (if Hamlet had sat on the throne of Denmark).

383 **To have..... royally**—to have shown himself to be a perfect king. **For his passage**—*i. e.*, to honour him in his death.

384. **The soldiers......war**—*i. e.*, military honour.

387. **Field**—*i. e.*, the battlefield. **Here .... amiss**—here it seems to be all gone wrong.

388. **Shoot**—fire-guns.

**Points to be noted** :

(1) The scene brings on the catastrophe, and is full of complicated matter, closely packed. The sudden hurtling of violent events is in itself effective after the long delay, occasioned by plot and counterplot. The king's war against Hamlet is at the crisis. The first attack—the shipping of Hamlet to be murdered in England—has failed. The next attack is ensured against failure by the double provision of poisoned sword and cup. And there is a total lack of caution on the part of Hamlet.

(2) Laertes playing the part of a villain, the phial of poison for his sword in his pocket, cannot certainly respond to Hamlet's appeal to his 'most generous thoughts'. It sounds a grim mockery when Laertes volunteers to settle the question of honour by referring the matter to elderly men of wisdom and experience; and we know that he is going to settle it by murdering Hamlet treacherously.

(3) Hamlet chooses the first foil, and while he is engaged in conversation by the king, Laertes, pretending that his first choice is 'too heavy,' chooses an 'unbated' weapon. Osric who has laid out the foils on the table, must be a party to the plot. We may visualize too Laertes dipping the tip of the sword in the phial of poison at the same moment. The blissful ignorance of their own fate, while the two plotters are making sure of the death of Hamlet, marks the subtlest tragic irony.

(4) The king watches the fencing bout with the keenest interest. Hamlet scores a hit. Laertes seems to be slow in action, and the king's drinking Hamlet's health is the mark for the king's own device to be put into execution without waiting for Laertes's fatal thrust. The king drinks the cup first, and then draws the pearl from his finger ; and drops it in, "and we shall guess......that he has pressed the spring which releases the poison." Then the cup is carried to Hamlet. But Hamlet will play the second bout before he drinks. After all, it is not going to turn out, as planned. They invite their own doom in their plot to murder Hamlet. There is a strange fatality about it all.

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them hew we will.

In the second bout Hamlet scores again. When the king tells the queen "our son shall win," he conveys a taunt to Laertes. The king is getting impatient for Laertes's dilly-dallying. The page is waiting with the poisoned cup for Hamlet. Now the queen leaves her seat, and comes to Hamlet sweating after the strenuous bout, and offers her 'napkin' to him to rub his brows. Then in a caprice of the moment, the queen snatches the poisoned cup from the page to drink Hamlet's health, and the king forbids it, but before he can stop it, the queen quaffs it. It is the descending of the doom.

(5) In the third bout, Laertes takes Hamlet half off his guard, and scores his first hit—and he draws blood. Hamlet's eyes are opened to the treachery of the sharpened sword, and in the scuffle

that follows Hamlet snatches away Laertes's swords and wounds him. They are both bleeding now. To Osric's inquiry Laertes, with his last breath, confesses the plot, incriminating the king too, to which further clarification comes from the queen's dying cry—'I am poison'd.' "And in the 'O my dear Hamlet' what agony of remorse ! For at last she understands. 'As kill a king .........a second time I kill my husband dead.........he poisons him in the garden for his estate.........!' And she has seen *this* cup sent on its errand."

(6) The end comes soon. Hamlet turns the poisoned sword upon the king and forces the poisoned cup down his throat.

"For 'tis the sport to have the enginer
Hoist with his own petar."

Hamlet fulfils his sacred task on the very line laid down by himself.

(7) Hamlet's dying appeal to Horatio :

Absent thee from felicity awhile.
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.

is revealing of his overscrupulousness, his acute sense of fairness and justice. The world must needs be told his story. He is not the assassin of the king. He is the executor of justice. The king was a murderer, usurper and an adulterer before that. The world must be acquainted with all this—and Hamlet's name must be cleared of all blame for acts of wrong and injustice Lily B. Campbell rightly states, "Hamlet was apparently chosen to execute the public vengeance delegated by God to the representatives, the rulers."

———

(Cyprian)

Imp

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. 1.** *Hamlet* **is basically a revenge-play, and yet it differs from a revenge-paly. Discuss.**

**Ans.** See *Introduction.* The following points may be noted :—

(1) *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd, a very popular play in its day, set the example. *Hamlet* is certainly a great advance on *The Spanish Tragedy.* None of its crudities are in *Hamlet.*

(2) The revenge motive, the ghost and supernatural soliciting, madness, delay in execution of revenge all derive from the revenge-play. Shakespeare follows the technique of the revenge-play in *Hamlet,* but with what a difference ! Shakespeare has intellectualized and refined the whole stuff of the drama. Hamlet's character is a creation of profoundest significance—and seems to have inexhaustible meaning It still remains to be fathomed. The ghost in *Hamlet* is a new orientation with the subtlest of suggestion—and has nothing in common with the ghost in *The Spanish Tragedy.*

(3) The play can never lose its interest. Critics imagine that Shakespeare has put his best into the play, and has gone so far as to identify Hamlet with Shakespeare. The character interest of the play distinguishes it fundamentally from a typical revenge-play. There is not Hamlet alone who engages our attention. There is Horatio whom Hamlet himself admires so much and for good reason too, for Horatio is a complement to Hamlet. To Horatio, critics have paid less attention, but to understand Hamlet properly, a study of Horatio is necessary. There is Laertes. Laertes may be studied as a foil to Hamlet. Fortinbras who appears so little in the play, cannot be overlooked. He, too, is admired by Hamlet. Horatio's balance of will and impulse, Fortinbras's clear-sighted will and purpose of action are things that Hamlet seems to lack in himself. The true characters demand to be set together—and studied and analysed.

(4) Hamlet's capacity for self-analysis and objectivity are something new in the English drama of the time, which, if nothing else, would remove Hamlet furthest from a revenge-play. The

delay in execution of revenge (for which Hamlet has been blamed by many critics) has been imported from the revenge-play. But Shakespeare has taken care to rationalize it. The delay is explained by Hamlet's habit of self-analysis, by his scrupulous sense of fairness and justice. There are in Hamlet also wild, passionate impulses which seem to be wholly unaccountable. In him 'blood and judgment' are not "so well-co-mingled" as in Horatio. Hamlet's madness again has been treated on a different line—it is nothing like Hieronimo's madness in *The Spanish Tragedy*.

(5) The dramatic criticism, put in the mouth of Hamlet, when instructing the players, is admitted to be Shakespeare's own—and seems to be deliberately inserted in the play, occasioned as it seems to be rivalry between "the Children of the Chapel" at the Blackfriar's Theatre and the public players including Shakespare's own company. This would be out of place in a revenge-play. The fact is that *Hamlet*, though deriving from a revenge-play, far transcends it in scope and interest. The characters, action, motivation, diversity of interest make *Hamlet* a far more complicated play than a revenge-play.

**Q. 2. Sketch the original Hamlet story and show what the play owes to it.**

**Ans.** See *Introduction*.

**Q. 3. Point out some of the inconsistencies in** ***Hamlet*****. How can you resolve them ?**

**Ans.** See *Introduction*. The following points may be noted :—

(1) Hamlet feigns madness, but nobody, not even the king, astute as he is, suspects it. Horatio is taken into his confidence by Hamlet, and Horatio does not betray this confidence. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern can make nothing of Hamlet. Hamlet is too clever for them. Polonius, however, limited his intelligence, finds that there is method in his madness, which does not mean that Polonius has discovered the truth. In considering the question, we forget one thing. Supposing that Hamlet had not told us that he was going to put the antic disposition on, could we have known or suspected that his madness was all feigning ?

(2) The queen does not suspect the secret of Hamlet's trouble. She is a coarse, sensual, unthinking woman, having adulterous relations with Claudius during her husband's lifetime. It could not have entered her mind that her overhasty

marriage could have anything to do with Hamlet's trouble of mind, or that it might appear in the light of incest to her son.

(3) When Ophelia is known to be mad, she should not have been allowed to go about as she pleased—and she would not have got drowned. But we should not forget here that her father was dead, and her brother was away. There was nobody then to take care of her.

(4) When Laertes takes up an unbated foil, Hamlet does not notice it, and yet he asks Osric whether, the foils are of the same length. The King keeps Hamlet engaged in cover-sation, and in the meantime, Laertes exchanges the foil.

(5) In the graveyard scene, we discover that Hamlet is thirty, while our impression till now has been that he is young. But a man is not certainly old at thirty. The queen, too, does not appear to be aged except in Hamlet's reference to her age.

for at your age
The heyday in the blood is tame.........

Hamlet's father appears to have reached the ripe old age when he was murdered. The queen could not have been young. From the medley of circumstances now this or that impression may rise in our mind, but it is a flitting impression. and it can give no ground for thinking that there are things improbable or inconsistent. There are sometimes minor inconsistencies in Shakespeare's play ; Shakespeare does not seem to mind them.

**Q. 4. Analyse the more important of Hamlet's soliloquies and say what purpose they serve.**

**Ans.** See *Introduction.*

**Q. 5. Bradley writes that Hamlet's melancholy accounts for his inaction. Do you agree with this view ? Or examine in detail the question of Hamlet's inaction.**

**Ans.** See *Introduction.*

**Q. 6. "Hamlet is not to be regarded as a tragedy of revenge, but as the tragedy of a human soul"** (*Goggin*). **Comment on the above.**

**Ans.** Goggin argues that the chief interest centres on Hamlet and the other characters in the play are mere accessories, and can have littl meaning apart from projecting the character of the hero and his motives of action. "In fact, the character of Hamlet

is itself the drama of *Hamlet*." It is true that Hamlet dominates the play. But do the other characters help us to understand Hamlet better ? We cannot say yes. He is brought into clash with almost all characters except Horatio. We understand little of Hamlet except what he reveals in his soliloquies and except what he reveals to Horatio. Otherwise, he keeps himself in the cloud. Hamlet has a unique capacity for self-analysis and objectivity of outlook. None but Hamlet explains himself best to us. The other characters are in a sense of subordinate importance.

The basic motive of the play is revenge, and it will not do to deny it. To say that the play is tragedy of a human soul is too broad a generalization. The accomplishment of the revenge is not found an easy task (as it is not easy too in a typical revenge-play), but it involves anguish and conflict and serious repercussion—and in that sense it may be a tragedy of the human soul and every Shakespearean tragedy is a tragedy of the human soul. But Goggin reads a still deeper meaning into it. He wants to say that *Hamlet* is the tragedy of humanity and that Hamlet is himself typical of humanity with its burdens heavy to bear. It is true that the profoundest issues of life are touched on in a tragic drama. It holds the mirror up to life. In that sense, every tragedy is a tragedy of human life. If this is all that Goggin means, we have no objection to his view.

Morton enunciates the view more emphatically too, "......it is the most inevitable and the most awful of tragedies, the tragedy of human life, we might almost say that Hamlet stands for humanity, with its burden greater that it can bear ; we are not all Macbeths nor Lears, nor Othellos *but we are all Hamlets*, even as was Shakespeare." Our answer to this will be first that we are not all Hamlets, and have not the same problems of life to deal with, and secondly that Shakespeare is not Hamlet, and must be greater than Hamlet he has created.

**Q. 7. Is Hamlet's madness real or feigned ? Discuss.**

**Ans.** See *Introduction*.

**Q. 8. Coleridge writes that overbalance of imaginative power is illustrated in the everlasting broodings, and superfluous activities of Hamlet's mind. Fully criticize the view.**

**Ans.** In the first place there is little evidence of overbalance of imaginative power in Hamlet. Macbeth is rather characterized by overbalance of imagination ; he is a poet driven to a foul

crime, to him, imagination becomes a source of perpetual agony and torment. Hamlet is the most intellectual of Shakespeare's tragic heroes. He has the rare gift of self-analysis, objectivity of outlook, speculative interest in the things of life, and the most scrupulous regard for the rightness of things.

The time is out of joint ; O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right.

Perhaps here we find the keynote to his character.

'The everlasting broodings' and what Coleridge call superfluous activities of his mind should be set down to his overscrupulousness, to his sense of fairness and justice. And these stand in the way of his immediate execution of revenge. The revelation of the ghost does not fully satisfy him. It might be an evil spirit, come to tempt him to the damnation of his soul. He satifies himself by arranging the murder of Gonzago to be played before the king. The play is the thing wherein he catches the conscience of the king. The broodings are necessitated until he is sure of his ground, and until his sense of justice is satisfied. Nor the activities of his mind are superfluous. Thinking too precisely on the event, is but appropriate in Hamlet's case—and he could not have done otherwise than that with his mental make up. It is not the overactivity of imagination in Hamlet, that seems to have led to postponement of action. Delay in the execution of revenge is a part of technique of a revenge drama ; Shakespeare, however, rationalizes it and brings the character of Hamlet into harmony with it.

**Q. 9. What references are there to the Elizabethan stage in Hamlet's conversation with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and what criticism does Hamlet make of the players, when instructing them ? Discuss their relevancy.**

**Ans.** *Rosencrantz. I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation*—The remark contains an allusion to the ousting of the Common or professional players by the boy-actors (the choristers of the Chapel Royal) at the Blackfriars' Theatre. Some read into it an allusion to Shakespeare's own company being involved in the conspiracy of Essex by performing *Richard II,* which was organized by Essex's followers. Rosencrantz describes the players coming to entertain Hamlet as 'the tragedians of the city.' Hamlet asks, "How chances it they travel ?" In 1901 Shakespeare's company in disgrace at Court seems to have "travelled" *i.e.,* to have been on a provincial tour,

visiting Aberdeen and Cambridge. It was indeed a fact, but we are not sure whether Shakespeare alludes to it here.

The boy-actors seem to have appeared as formidable competitors of the public stage. They are "an eyrie of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and most tyrannically clapped for 't." These words testify to the popularity of boy-actors. Dramatists are drawn into this rivalry. Ben Johson's comical satire—*Cynthia's Revels* is offered to the boy-actors in 1600. It is an attack upon Dekker and Marston. Dekker and Marston attack Jonson in *Satiro-Mastin*, and it is produced by Shakespeare's company at the Globe Theatre. There is a reference to the Globe Theatre in Rosencrantz's remark,—"Ay, that they do, my lord ; *Hercules and his load too*," when Hamlet asks, "Do the boys carry it away ?" The boy-actors seem to have scored against the professionals for the time being. The War of Theatres, as it is called, involving both actors and dramatists, is referred to in Scene ii, Act 2.

In Scene ii, Act 3 Hamlet instructs the players. The criticism that Hamlet makes of the players is Shakespeare's own, and we may assume that it is intended for Shakespeare's company at the Globe, "For in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, *you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness*." An actor allows himself to be carried away by his feeling or passion ; he is advised to cultivate balance and proportion, thereby achieving naturalness. "I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing termagant, it out-herods Herod." Ranting and blustering which seem to have been popular with the "groundlings". Hamlet wants to be totally banned from the stage. The purpose of playing, as he says, is to hold the mirror up to nature, and it will be defeated by over-acting. No overstepping the modesty of nature sums up Hamlet's advice. The action must be suited to the word and the word to the action. The players are in the habit of strutling and bellowing on the stage, this is anything but acting. Hamlet is right in complaining that these players have neither the accent or gait of a Christian or a pagan, or a man.

There is another practice which Hamlet condemns. The clowns sometimes add something of their own to the speeches set down for them to amuse the spectators. This is known as "gag." Hamlet is definitely against it ! "And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them, for there be of

them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators too." Shakespeare might have in mind Will Kemp the clown. G. B. Harrison writes, "His form of art was old-fashioned and boisterous. The groundlings loved him, and a new jig by Kemp certainly attracted a crowd ; but as the art of playing advanced, Shakespeare and the others began to take their profession more seriously and the extemporal merriments of the old clown became irksome and embarrassing. They could well away with jigs and tables of bawdry."

The dramatic criticism and as we believe that it is Shakespeare's own— has a value of its own, but the question of whether it is in place in *Hamlet*. The occasion is appropriately provided by the arrival of the players. Hamlet wants the Gonzago play to be performed by them—and as Hamlet's purpose is to probe the king in the scene of Gonzago's murder, it is a vital part of the action. And Hamlet has to take particular care in instructing the players so that the full effect of the Gonzago play may be brought to bear upon the king ; the elaborate instructions to the players, therefore, may be defended. And the delay in Hamlet's execution of revenge, which seems to be necessitated has its explanation here. Hamlet must be sure of his grounds before acting—and the Gonzago-play may supply the grounds.

**Q. 10. H. A. Taine says that Hamlet is Shakespeare. Give your own views on the matter.**

**Ans.** The question is whether we can identify Shakespeare with any of the characters, created by him Some say that Prospero (*The Tempest*) is Shakespeare. Prospero breaks his magic wand and buries it certain fathoms in the earth. This is symbolically interpreted as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage. The Prospero with his serene wisdom and generosity of heart, with his comprehension of human frailties and compassion, with his love and humanity, with his vision of a regenerated world is conjectured to be Shakespeare's self-projection, unconscious though it may be. Similarly, critics have been eager enough to identify Hamlet with Shakespeare. They see in Shakespeare's tragedies a certain phase of his mind being reflected—a questioning of spirit and disquiet, 'life's fitful fever' disillusion and pessimism. It may be all right to read such a mental crisis into his tragedies —a temporary phase after all. *Hamlet*, *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear* might lend support to such an interpretation. Some have shown a marked tendency to interpret Shakespeare's plays, and particu-

larly his *Sonnets* subjectively. But there should be a limit to such interpretation. It is going too far when Shakespeare is identified with Hamlet or Prospero.

It is forgotten that drama is an objective art. A dramatist must keep himself into the background, and let his characters speak for themselves, according to the context and situation. Self-effacement is the great virtue of a dramatist. He cannot, and should not make his characters the vehicles of his own views and outlook on life. Incidentally, we may catch the dramatist's individual turn of thought and reflection and phrasing in the way his characters speak or act. But that is a different matter. The dramatist does not put his personal thoughts into his characters, but thoughts that are demanded by the particular situation or circumstances in which they are set. It is a process of *de personalization.* We mistake the very purpose of Shakespeare's drama when we identify this or that character with him. The creator must be greater than what he creates —an obvious fact that should not be forgotten.

Verity rejects this theory of impersonality and maintains that in *Hamlet* we get near to Shakespeare himself, and that the tragedy contains a measure of self-revelation. He writes, "I confess this theory of impersonality, of the creator's absolute, self-detachment from what he creates, is beyond my comprehension." Verity does not, however, go so far as to say that Hamlet is Shakespeare.

It is true that art is a means of self-expression. His works reveal a mind rich in human sensibilities, experience and wisdom, acute perception and large-heartedness and genuine humanity, rare insight and poetic vision. And what he says in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* about a poet is true of himself:

> And, as imagination bodies forth,
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turn them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

All that we know by reading Shakespeare's plays is that he is the best and greatest of poets. He cannot be Hamlet or Prospero.

> Others abide our question. Thou art free.
> We ask and ask : Thou smilest and art still,
> Out-topping knowledge.

**Q 11.**

**"The time is out of joint : O cursed spite,**
**That ever I was born to set it right !"**

**In these words, I imagine, is the key to Hamlet's whole procedure, and to me it is clear that Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul to the performance of it.—*Goethe*. Criticize the view.**

**Ans.** See *Introduction.*

**Q 12. How do you account the Hamlet's popularity?**

**Ans.** See *Introduction.*

**Q 13. "When Hamlet was written Shakespeare had passed through his years of apprenticeship and become a master-dramatist (*Dowden*). Briefly sketch the development of Shakespeare's genius as displayed in *Hamlet*.**

**Ans.** Shakespeare opened his dramatic career with lyrical plays such as *Love's Labours Lost, The Comedy of Errors, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet, Richard II* and a few more. These are the plays of the first period (1589 to 1594?). All his work in this period bears the impress of youth. It is with the keen eye and kindly heart of youth that he views the affairs of men. He shows himself a keen observer of nature, going into raptures over the glorious forms of physical and material beauty. He is now master of "taffeta phrases, silken terms precise." His facile gift of poetic expression, sparkling wit and playful humour distinguish his earlier plays. He seems to have paid more attention to beauty of expression than to the fundamentals of thought in the beginning, to the grouping of characters and construction of plot than to development of character in contact with circumstances. His experience of life is now in the formative stage—and skims along the surface of things, and it is mere fragments of life which are reflected in his earlier plays, and which his radiant fancy lights up.

In the second period lasting till 1601, and marked still by a sense of joyfulness of life and gracious humour but a deepening sense of humanity, the noted characteristic is Shakespeare's imagination taking hold of the realities of life. In dramatizing history, he deals with intractable facts which he transmutes into art and poetry, bidding farewell to conceits, prettinesses and affectations, abounding in his earlier plays. This should be counted as a positive advance. There is more interest in individual characters and their development. We meet kings and nobles, soldiers and

statesmen, traitors and courtiers in the historical plays; diversity of characters and incidents and their interlocking reveal growing mastery of the technique of drama and richer experience and knowledge. Portia in the *Merchant of Venice* emerges as a type of clearly-defined individualized womanhood, followed by Ophelia, Isabella, Desdemona, Cordelia, each made to face life and its problems in her own way. The plays of the second period—*King John*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* mark a great advance in characterization in knowledge, in wisdom, in political insight, in pathos, in portraiture of human suffering, and in the higher type of men and women presented to us.

The third period comes down from 1601 to 1608. *Hamlet* belongs to this period—the period of his great tragedies. With his deeper knowledge and experience of the complicated affairs of life, and growing insight and consciousness, Shakespeare seems to have entered on a spiritual crisis. He seems to be no more interested in mirth and love, in pomp and splendour. A deep searching of spirit on life and its meaning and purpose—"the heart ache and the thousand natural shocks," which Shakespeare too might have experienced as we may presume the tragedies shadow forth. We encounter a "mass of evil, of sacrifice, of good to ill, of triumph of the base over the noble," in these tragedies. The general tone of Hamlet expresses disillusion and pessimism, provoked by the vice and corruption of life, but there is also the striving to recapture the vision of a fairer life and order of things. This is the meaning of *Hamlet* as a tragedy. In the tragedies, Shakespeare goes deep into life and its fundamental issues, which are dealt with adequately with his mastery of thought and expression with his ripening knowledge and experience, tinged as they are with disillusion; and let it be admitted that this disillusion is the way to truth.

**Q. 14. As an intellectual drama, compare *Hamlet* with *Othello*, *Macbeth* and other tragedies of Shakespeare.**

**Ans.** *Hamlet* is marked by the greatest subtlety in conception of character and complication of motives. When we compare *Hamlet* with *Othello*, we find something of subtlety in Iago's analysis of his motives, but Iago's character is not set in a tragic key. Iago's analysis of his motives has been described by Coleridge as "motiveless motive-grinding" and it seems to be nothing more than a display of his dialectial skill—all word-

chopping. Hamlet's analysis of his motives goes into the roots of his very character, and its tragic significance is always pointed. In *Othello*, there is less of complexity that characterizes the development of action in *Hamlet*. The tragedy in *Othello* turns on the supposed incompatability of union between Othello, a Moor, and a white lady. At least critics assume this to be the very essence of the tragedy. The machinations of Iago are the most important factor in the development of the plot, and the simplicity of Othello and Desdemona makes it easy for Iago to carry out his diabolical intrigue. The motives he sets forth in his soliloques are not meant to satisfy either himself or h s audience He has a devilish brain for intrigue, and he plays his game almost unchecked till the end, when his wife, Emilia, exposes him.

It may be noted that both *Hamlet* and *Othello* are plays of intrigue. In *Hamlet* the atmosphere of intrigue makes the play so complex and its movement so slow. In both the plays there is the revenge-motive ; in *Othello* it is weaker ; in *Hamlet* it is rendered more tense, exciting and tragic by the frustration of purposes. The story of *Hamlet* is simple in outline, but the intellectualization of the content and rationalization of the delay that occurs in the execution of revenge make the play so difficult to comprehend.

When *Hamlet* is compared with *Macbeth*, we see that *Macbeth* is a play more compared, the relation between character and incident being maintained with greater dramatic cogency. *Macbeth* has been described as a tragedy of ambition. We may trace points of affinity between the two. Like Hamlet, Macbeth is possessed of passionate imagination and keen sensibilities. Macbeth's retribution is partly wrought through his imagination ; it may also be pointed out that like Hamlet, Macbeth displays speculative interest in the things of life. We may take the following soliloquy of Macbeth :

> If it were done when 'tis done, then 't were well
> It were done quickly ; if the assassination
> Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,
> With his surcease success ; that but this blow
> Might be the be-all and end-all here,
> But here, upon this bank and shoal of time
> We'd jump the life to come.

Here Macbeth speculates about the future. Similarly, in his famous soliloquy—"To be, or not to be"—Hamlet speculates

about the future. The difference is that Macbeth contemplates the crime of murder and its consequence, which, he is afraid, may extend beyond this life—and he quails at the idea of this, while Hamlet, oppressed by the burden and mystery of life, contemplates suicide. Macbeth is urged on to the fulfilment of his ambition by the instigation of his wife and the supernatural soliciting of the witches. He begins, with a crime, and then he has to secure himself by a repetition of crime ; at last the doom falls on him, wrought as it is, by his imagination and sensibilities and also by the external agency of the witches. Now in *Hamlet* there is the same supernatural soliciting, the revenge-motive is supplied by the ghost of Hamlet's father. It is a sacred task, imposed upon Hamlet, and in carrying it through he meets with obstacles both internal and external. It is easier for Macbeth to attain his object through a crime ; if he has moral scruples in the beginning, they are swept off by the chiding tongue of his wife. Hamlet's sacred duty to his father involves the crime of murder ; it is murder, sanctified by the motive of revenge. The question why Hamlet has not been able to execute his revenge with one stroke puzzles critics. But delay is the very essence of a revenge-play, such as *Hamlet* is.

Both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are romantic tragedies, making use of the supernatural machinery. There is a finer touch and delicacy in the supernatural of *Hamlet* ; the physical loathsomeness of the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* can never be overcome but the Ghost in *Hamlet* is a being aloof from us—a phantom, provoking in us "thoughts, beyond the reaches of our souls"— it is a more effective use of the supernatural in any case.

The other tragedies with which we may compare *Hamlet* are *Julius Caesar* and *King Lear*. In *Julius Caesar* there is the ghost of Caesar, and Caesar dead seems to be more powerful than Caesar living The spirit of Caesar roving about for revenge is a figure as impressive as the ghost of Hamlet's father demanding of his son the duty of revenge. Brutus has been compared with Hamlet. There is an idealistic strain in both—speculation as opposed to action being dominant in both. When we compare *Hamlet* with *King Lear*, we find that both are plays of dark, menacing and violent passion. Perhaps King Lear has a greater tragic grandeur when he raves in unison with storm and thunder on a blasted health than Hamlet vehemently reproaching himself for the failure of his task.

**Q. 15. What different interpretations have been offered of Hamlet's character ?**

**Ans.** See *Introduction*.

**Q. 16. "This "overthrow" of a "noble mind" (though not by madness as Ophelia thought) is the tragedy of Hamlet" (*Herford*). Comment on the view.**

**Ans.** It is Ophelia's estimate (*overthrow of a noble* mind ; which she supposes to be due to madness) from which Herford proceeds. Hamlet plays the mad man to Ophelia, and Ophelia who can suspect nothing of Hamlet's real trouble, naturally concludes that Hamlet's mind has been wrecked by madness—and she seems to be right so far as circumstances go. We may discount madness as the cause of the overthrow of Hamlet's mind because we know Hamlet better than Ophelia. The moot question is the overthrow of a noble mind. To assume it, is to assume that Hamlet is gone mad, which is not a fact at all. Hamlet has a noble mind, it is true, and that noble mind is distracted by grief and passion, is poisoned by bitterness and disillusion and sometimes agitated by violent impulses, which brings him to the verge of madness. No, it is not a noble mind overthrown, but profoundly shaken and agitated by "the dissonance between what should be and what is" as Herford finally puts it. Hamlet is an idealist and naturally, things evil and disproportionate move him, "The time is out of joint". His acute perception and delicate sensibilities are outraged by all that he sees in Denmark after his return from Wittenberg. His mother's incestuous marriage with his uncle is a shock which he cannot get over. The revelation of his father's ghost is simply stunning to him, and if he had a weak nerve, he would have been driven to madness. For the moment he takes refuge in pulling out his memorandum book and writing in it a piece of triviality. So he is able to fence off the onslaught of madness. Then he reasons out the thing to himself. To keep off the encroachment of madness and for his own safety, he proposes to put an antic disposition on. Dowden rightly says, "Hamlet's madness is not deliberately assumed ; an antic disposition is, as it were, imposed upon him by the almost hysterical excitement which follows his interview with the Ghost, and he ingeniously justifies it to himself by discovering that it may hereafter serve a purpose." By his violence of passion he may sometimes be driven to the verge of madness; but otherwise he acts in full consciousness of reason and judgment. If there is delay in the execution of his

revenge, it is because of his "noble mind", which keeps itself intact, never swerving from the line of fairness and justice. He cannot take the words of the ghost and sweep on to revenge. He must have grounds more relative before acting, and these are supplied by the scene of Gonzago's murder in which he catches the conscience of the king Finally, Hamlet accomplishes his revenge, though postponed, not by irresolution but by that his seeking legitimate grounds for action—and it is a noble mind which is manifested in his revenge, his last with being his name should stand clear of blame and the world learns from Horatio's report that what Hamlet has done is to wipe out the stain of "carnal boody and unnatural acts"

**Q. 17. "Ophelia—poor Ophelia ! O far too soft, too good, too fair, to be cast among the briers of this working-day world, and fall and bleed upon the thorns of life !" Comment**

**Ans.** The fate of Ophelia is certainly to be pitied. Caught in the clash of forces she is torn asunder. She is too soft, too good, too fair. If things had run the normal course, it would have gone all well with her. Hamlet's love would have consummated her happiness and peaceful existence, protecting her from the rough usages of the world. The tragedy in her life is directly traceable to the upset in Hamlet's nature and his swerving away from her. Claudius's villainy is ultimately responsible for the tragedy in love. The ghost's revelation coming on top of Hamlet's revulsion of feeling at his mother's overhasty marriage (which he considers incestuous) must have swept love and Ophelia out of his mind. He could have now no thought to give to love. He has to fulfil the task of revenge. Yet if Ophelia had been a strong and intelligent girl, she could have stood by Hamlet. Ophelia could not have certainly fathomed the secret trouble of Hamlet's mind. If she had been a little more intelligent, she could have understood that something was wrong with Hamlet, and if her love had been strong enough, her sympathy would have gone to him, and she would have tried to understand him. Ophelia seems to be lacking in personality. She allows herself to be used as tool by her father and the king in the machination against Hamlet. To act as she does as a decoy to probe Hamlet would go against the sense of honour and love too with which we credit Ophelia. Hamlet's behaviour with Ophelia has been condemned by some—but with his quick perception he senses the game when he sees Ophelia

kneeling with a prayer-book in hand. Ophelia might cry out, "O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown......And I, of ladies most deject and wretched, that suck'd the honey of his music vows." It may be doubted whether these words are an expression of strong love, and not of pique.

Ophelia plays a dishonourable role as a decoy, and we cannot blame Hamlet if it rouses a violent reaction in him. We may say that she is far too soft, too good, too fair, and all that. But can it justify the ignominy of her role ? She might have been saved from her fate by her love for Hamlet. Her love is as weak as her personality. Her rejection by Hamlet might have worked upon her mind ; then came the killing of her father and his hustled and secret burial. It unhinged her mind. And then there was nobody to look after her, and she got herself drowned. We might mourn her fate. We might believe too that she was not one to be able to take care of herself. Perhaps it might have been all right if she had acted on her own and if she had relied on Hamlet's love, and if she had stood by Hamlet instead of going over to the enemy's camp. Ophelia lets down Hamlet. We should have expected to see Ophelia ranging like Horatio on the side of Hamlet. But perhaps it was not to be. And she is sucked in into the tragedy that involves the death of so many.

**Q 18. "Horatio in Hamlet's position would have done the deed at once, and seven lives would have been saved". — *Verity*. Do you accept the view ?**

**Ans.** We have Hamlet's estimate of Horatio's character. This does not, however, make out that Horatio is a man of action and quick decision. Both Hamlet and Horatio were together at Wittenberg University. There must have been something in common between them despite the differences in their character—and it must have drawn them together. They were interested in the study of philosophy ; that explains the speculative interest of both in the things of life and their scepticism too with regard to the ghost. Both are intellectuals. Hamlet has quicker perception and keener susceptibilities. The difference he notices between himself and Horatio is a fundamental one, however, there may be strong affinities between the two characters.

Hamlet rightly assesses Horatio's character as a balanced one. Hamlet is swayed by gusts of passion; he lack's Horatio's balance

But it does not imply that Horatio is a man of quick decision or a man of action. Horatio is not "a passion's slave" ; Horatio is one in whom—"blood and judgment" are balanced. If Horatio is what Hamlet sets him forth to be, we cannot accept Verity's dictum. In Hamlet's circumstances after having heard what the ghost has to say, we cannot imagine that Horatio would have swept on to revenge at once. Balanced in judgment as he is, he must consider the problem as Hamlet does. Is the ghost telling him the truth ? Is the ghost a good spirit or an evil spirit ? Might not the ghost lure him to damnation of his soul ? These questions must rise in Horatio's mind as they do in Hamlet's. Then there are practical difficulties which seem to be ignored by Verity. Hamlet's hostile attitude to the king is obvious from the beginning. He must have gone about guarded for self-protection. In the probing of Hamlet in the scene with Ophelia, the king does not seem to be convinced that love is the cause of Hamlet's madness

> There's something in his soul,
> O'er which his melancholy sits on brood ;
> And I do doubt the hatch and disclose
> Will be some danger.

It might be a danger to himself and the state. And the king has good reason to be doubly cautious. Horatio could not have accomplished the revenge at once. Hamlet had a chance when tha king was at prayer, and that after Hamlet had been convinced of the king's guilt in the Gonzago–murder scene. But who knows that reasons like Hamlet's would not have deterred Horatio from killing the king at the moment ?

There is Fortinbras, and Fortinbras is represented as a man of action. Laertes rushes into the presence of the king, demanding explanation of his father's death. We do not know how either Fortinbras or Laertes would have acted in Hamlet's circumstances. We cannot believe that Horatio, a scholar and intellectual, with balanced judgment and passion under control, could have acted rashly—and would have accomplished the revenge without pausing to think and reason about it. Hamlet might now and then act impulsively, as in the matter of sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to death, but Horatio by nature could not. Horatio has been more or less a passive spectator—and this role suits him better than anything else. Fortinbras is a man of action, but Horatio is not. Verity's judgment is wide of the mark.

**Q. 19. "The universality of Shakespeare's genius is some sort reflected in Hamlet."—Discuss.**

**Ans.** In Hamlet, Shakespeare has created a character which is noted for its many-sidedness. And it is this or that aspect of his character, which has been emphasized by critics. Some have seized upon his melancholy and explained everything by melancholy. Some have dwelt upon his pessimistic outlook and cynicism. Some have attributed to him a speculative turn of mind and a habit of generalization ; some have seen in him a detached intellectual with a rare capacity for self-analysis, and the gift of wit or sarcasm. And we have nothing but a partial view of Hamlet's character, taken as a whole, shows an intellectual aptitude for everything in life. He may appear to be detached from life, but does not life mean intensely to him, and is he not fully alive to the beauty and glory of life. We may take his rhapsody : "What a piece of work is man ! how noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! in form and moving how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! In apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals !"

There is Ophelia's tribute, the truth of which we cannot deny, though this phase of his character might be a thing of the past :

> The courtier's soldier's scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
> The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> The observed of all observers..................

The ghost shakes his disposition "with thoughts beyond the reaches" of his soul. His mind is enriched with the study of philosophy—and is capable of broad generalization. It is a mind at once abstract and practical—and while it moves on a higher plane of thought and speculation, he is not oblivious of the snares spread round him by the king. When he hears that he is being sent to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he knows that the king has something up his sleeve.

> O, 'tis most sweet
> When in one line two crafts directly meet.

Hamlet seems to have uncanny intuition. He can challenge the king's strategy on his own terms.

His intellectual accomplishment is displayed in his intimate talks with Horatio, and then again in his intelligent and sane criticism of the stage convention and acting of the players. His

wit it best displayed in turning the euphuism of Osric upside down.

"He divines, with the rapidity of lightning, the nature and motives of those who are brought into contact with him fits in a moment his bearing and retorts to their individual peculiarities: is equally at home whether he is mocking Polonius with hidden raillery, or dissipating Ophelia's dream of love, or crushing the sponges with sarcasm and invective of talking euphuism with Osric, and satirizing while he talks it : whether he is uttering wise maxims or welcoming the players with factions graciousness—probing the inmost souls of others, or sounding the mysteries of his own." The character would have a rounded perfection of its own, but for a few shortcomings—the sway of passion and impulse, the subtlety of intellect and hyper-sensitiveness

**Q. 20. "Polonius is the complacent wiseacre infatuate in opinion, precipitate in action—and usually wrong."—** *H. Granville-Barker*. **Discuss.**

**Ans.** See *Introduction* (*Characters*).

**Q 21. "These words which combine the noblest pleading ever proffered for the rights of human reason with the loftiest vindication ever uttered of those rights, no mortal ear within our knowledge has ever heard spoken on the stage."—***Swinburne*. **Justify.**

**Ans.** Swinburne's words refer to Hamlet's soliloquy at the end of scene iv, Act iv. Fortinbras is marching with troops against Poland. This occasions the soliloquy. Hamlet contrasts himself with Fortinbras—his inaction with Fortinbras's action. Swinburne praises it for a different reason. The soliloquy is the apotheosis of reason. Reason makes all the difference between man and beast—that "large discourse, looking before and after." Yes, it is god-like reason. It does not certainly "fust" unused in Hamlet. Hamlet seems to have a little too much of god-like reason and he uses it a little too liberally. It is "looking before and after" Hamlet condemns the "craven scruple of thinking too precisely on the event." What else is thinking too precisely on the event than the exercise of god-like reason ? There can be no craven scruple in it. There seems to be a strange contradiction in the soliloquy. Hamlet condemns what appears to him as his own inaction ; he defends the use of reason. Now it is the exercise of reason and judgment that postpones his revenge. Swinburne is interested in no other part of the soliloquy than in Hamlet's glorification of reason.

Hamlet's condemnation of his own inaction turns out to be a defence of reason. A man is no more than a beast if his chief business is to sleep and feed. Hamlet's mental pre-occupation is the revenge of his father's death. He is impatient for it, and thinks that he has been putting it off. If conscience reason and judgment had not been very strong in him, he might have attempted it at first opportunity that might have offered. He defines the property of reason as "looking before and after," and Hamlet has been looking before and after—and he cannot accomplish his revenge until the ground is prepared for it. He has certainly been acting like a man, pre-eminently gifted with reason. His defence of reason is indirectly a defence of his inaction—but he is not aware of it.

Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake.

This is what reason tells Hamlet—and he finds it illustrated in Fortinbras. His honour is as much at stake in "a father kill'd, a mother stain'd." The very consciousness of it shows that the god-like reason is present and active in him. He is so unhappy because he has not been able to revenge his father's murder and vindicate his mother's honour. He may think that reason fusts unused in him, but that is not so.

**Q. 22. "Hamlet is a name ; his speeches and sayings but the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What, then, are they not real ? They are as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind. It is *we* who are Hamlet."** —*Hazlitt*. **Elucidate.**

**Ans.** Hamlet is a poetic creation. Shakespeare's genius "gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." Here the local habitation is the state of Denmark—it is but a picturesque setting. And Hamlet is the character round which certain events and facts are but grouped, and his speeches and sayings are but related to them. The whole thing is an invention of Shakespeare. And Hamlet interests us ; Hamlet interests all readers more of less. We have to find out the reason for this.

Hazlitt says that it is we who are Hamlet. Now Hamlet has "a father kill'd, a mother stain'd." He has got to avenge the murder of his father and vindicate the honour of his mother (who has been seduced by Claudius). Hazlitt cannot mean that the readers of *Hamlet* have similar problems to deal with. Then the question of suicide and the painful riddles of life which haunt and trouble the mind of Hamlet are not the issues which

an average reader has to face. Or does ever reader imagine himself to be an intellectual like Hamlet and see himself reflected in Hamlet? Does he imagine too that life appears as a tangled to him as it does to Hamlet? This cannot be.

Few readers have the subtle intellect the delicate sensibilities, the acute perception, the overscrupulousness of Hamlet—and few readers again have the same capacity for suffering, and will be affected in a similar way by the enigmas of life. There can be then no question of a reader identifying himself with Hamlet for the matter of that.

We are so much interested in Hamlet because he is an engaging personality. He casts a spell upon his readers. "We see with his eyes, and think his thoughts. Hamlet readily infects us with his speculative and abstract turn of thought, with his sensitiveness to evil and corruption in the world. It is not the event that engage our attention. We are interested in Hamlet's mental reaction to these events. It does not matter so much to us if the revenge remains unexecuted. What he feels and sees, appeals to us, and not what he does. And it is no life as a whole that he gives his reflections and observations—"the heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks," and they go to the heart of everybody. And so Hazlitt may say that they are as real as our own thoughts.

Life is a reality to Hamlet—and to painful a reality at that. But he can easily dissociate himself from it, and the objectivity of his observations and reflection on life makes them so powerful. His terrible loneliness—the yawning gulf between him and all others in the play—is a fact that makes us contemplate him with an irresistible fascination. And the reader may realize too this shattering fact of loneliness—the total isolation of one individual from another:

Yes: in the sea of life enisl'd,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal million live *alone*.

Hamlet provokes thoughts in us, and his thoughts are ours, and in this sense we are Hamlet.

**Q. 23. "Claudius is the villain of the piece." Discuss.**

**Ans.** See *Introduction* (*Characters*).

**Q. 24. What part does the supernatural bear in the motivation of the action of the play?**

**Ans.** See *Introduction*. The following points may be noted:

(1) Hamlet returns from Wittenberg, evidently being summoned to attend the coronation of Claudius. Claudius has got himself elected King of Denmark. Perhaps it would not have mattered much to Hamlet. He alludes but once to it. But his mother's overhasty marriage causes a revulsion of feeling in him (his soliloquy in Scene ii, Act II). The world appears "an unweeded garden" and he rages in impotence. He can do nothing against the evil. His disgust with life leads him to contemplate suicide.

(2) Now when Hamlet hears from the ghost about the foul and secret murder of his father, he cries out, "O my prophetic soul !" So it appears that on his arrival at Elsinore, he senses something rotten in the state of Denmark. The ghost demands of him that he must revenge the foul and most unnatural murder of his father. He promises to sweep to his revenge "with wings as swift as meditation or the thoughts of love." That's all right. But there are things that intervene in the execution of his revenge. Till now Hamlet is helpless against the state of things he sees in Denmark. The ghost supplies him with the necessary motive of action.

(3) Whem Hamlet gave the ghost his promise of the ready execution of the revenge, he forgot one thing about himself—his sceptical turn of mind. Later, he must have seriously thought about the ghost's visit and the revelations made by him. "The spirit that I have seen may be the devil." He must have grounds more relative than the ghost's revelation. So he organizes the play of the murder of Gonzago and he is satisfied of the guilt of the king. Soon he has a chance to kill the king when he finds him at prayer, but he spares him. It will be no revenge "to take him in the purging of his soul." By killing him now he will but send him to heaven. The action has been set in motion by the ghost's revelations, and the action must run its course.

(4) Hamlet's interview with his mother follows immediately after this. The ghost pays his second visit. The ghost has already warned Hamlet to take no action against the queen. Perhaps his solicitude for the queen brings him again when Hamlet might forget himself and deal harshly with the queen. The ghost is unseen by the queen, nor his words enter her ears.

"This visitation
Is but to whet thy blunted purpose."

The ghost does not mean to reproach Hamlet for his slow-

ness in action. His words are provoked by Hamlet's self-reproach :

"That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread command."

The action is in full swing. The king's counter move is a factor to be taken into account.

(5) We may believe that Hamlet is now ready to execute the revenge. He is shipped off to England. When he returns, there is the plot against his life, formed by the king and Laertes jointly, each outbidding the other in villainy. They are finally caught in their own trap, and Hamlet executes his revenge at the cost of his own life. The tragedy could not have ended otherwise.

**Q. 25 "But with crippled faith and enfranchised reason at odds in us we do self-defeating things, and may lapse into impotence and despair. That is Hamlet's case."**—*H. Granville-Barker.* **Discuss.**

**Ans.** Hamlet has his own peculiar problems—to avenge the murder of his father and vindicate the honour of his mother—and he meets with difficulties in fulfilling the task. At the same time, he goes through a spiritual crisis, and that because of his subtle intellect, acute sensibilities, capacity for self-analysis and generalization and objectivization of experience. His deep shock at his mother's misconduct changes his outlook on life. It is followed by his knowledge of the foul and secret murder of his father through a communication from the ghost of his father. With his hypersensitiveness it must have been a shattering experience to him, and that he could have retained sanity of mind, indicates no such measure of self-mastery—and this we may trace to his study of philosophy at Wittenberg. Horatio and Hamlet were fellow-students at Wittenberg, and the balance of passion and judgment in Horatio is more typical of stoicism, while Hamlet has been less able to get passion under control, however, he may worship reason Stoical apathy and stoical fortitude are evident in Hamlet though he has not been able to live up to the stoic ideal. We may refer to one or two instances.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will".

"If it be now, is not to come, if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will : the readiness is all". It is a typical expression of stoicism.

Hamlet is a man divided against himself, his faith in man and woman, his faith in life and in beauty, truth and good lost. He still believes in reason and the supremacy of reason and he believes in the light that reason may still shed on the dark pathways of life. With his fitful passion now and then carrying him into action, he often lapses into impatience and despair. Yet finally, though in a spasmodic and haphazard way, he executes the revenge.

We may indeed read a symbol into Hamlet. In his spiritual troubles, as Granville-Barker says, some people may find only a more vivid shadowing forth of their own. Hamlet is the picture of an intellectual, set adrift from faith, and depending only on reason for deciphering the enigmas of existence. And the reason in Hamlet leads to a spiritual impasses. As Granville-Barker points out, "It becomes tragic when things beyond the mind's mastery are at stake; and when, affections disabled and spiritual security gone, only 'god-like reason' is left a man for guide. Hamlet is a human soul adrift. And all the wisdom which his rash and lonely mind can teach him is that Denmark is a prison and the world one, the goodly frame of the earth a sterile promontory, and man—the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals— a quintessence of dust. No better than a beast if he does not use his reason ; yet, using it, this is what he finds.

Yet, is Hamlet landed on pessimism by the use of reason only, as Granville-Barker makes it out ? His experience of life drives him to it, and it will not do to forget it. He had a sheltered existence at Wittenberg. He is undeceived when he returns to Elsinore. If he could go back to Wittenberg, who knows that it might have been otherwise—that he might have rallied again to beauty and truth ? Life at Elsinore teaches him a hard lesson. If he had not had the association of Horatio, he would have wrecked himself. "One may smile, and smile, and be a villain"—that has been his experience at Elsinore. He finds none honest there. Even Ophelia whom he loved sincerely—for "forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love, make up his sum"—fails him. What has he look to at Elsinore ? Rottenness everywhere. We can well understand his disillusion and bitterness of spirit and we do not wonder if he does self-defeating things. If anything, reason keeps him sane and sober—and steady in the pursuit of the task, imposed upon him.

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# Other Plays on Similar Lin

1. Macbeth.
2. Coriolanus.
3. Henry V.
4. Tempest
5. Cymbeline.
6. As You Like it.
7. Merchant of Venice.
8. Julius Caesar.
9. Hamlet.
10. Romeo & Juliet.
11. Love's Labour Lost.
12. Antony & Cleopatra.
13. Twelfth Night.
14. King Lear.
15. Othello.
16. Midsummer's Night Dream.
17. Much Ado About Nothing.
18. The Winter's Tale.
19. Sonnets.

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